

Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 33

Crimsonwave Temple

I Eat Tomatoes

(我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller... than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: Solesky and Ji Ning

The tens of thousands of copies of Realmsoul Polo began to disappear from the skies above the Waveshift Realm.

“Let’s go to Crimsonwave Temple.”

“Let’s go.”

“The realmsoul has already made it clear that only supreme Daolords are capable of surviving Crimsonwave Temple. We’re not on that level of power yet. If we go, we’ll die.”

“I won’t be satisfied if we don’t even go take a look! Plus, there’s always a chance, no matter how slim. We might be able to seize that chance.”

“Even if we don’t go inside, we can wait around outside the palace. We still might have a chance.”

Although the realmsoul had made the situation perfectly clear, there were still many Daolords who elected to head towards the Crimsonwave Temple. And of course, none of the supreme Daolords hesitated at all.

“Shall we head to Crimsonwave Temple together?” Winesage asked.

“Let’s. We’re quite a ways away from Crimsonwave Temple, and there will be many dangers along the path. If we join forces, we’ll move faster,” Palace Lord Dawnstar agreed.

“I’m fine with that. Badlands, what say you?” Ning looked at Daolord Badlands, who smiled and nodded: “This is just an avatar. I’ve been prepared for death this entire time. I might as well go to check out the Crimsonwave Temple first.”

“Let’s move.” Winesage smiled slightly. He had naturally heard of Daolord Badlands long ago; the presence of Badlands’ would naturally be of help.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Winesage and Dawnstar simply flew, while Ning rode aboard his flying vessel as he wished to have a private conversation with Emperor Solesky. At present, the only ones within that

vessel were Ning, Badlands, and Emperor Solesky.

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Within the flying vessel. Badlands had long ago moved to the front deck to stare off into the distance, allowing Ning and Emperor Solesky to stand at the other end of the vessel.

“Big brother Solesky.” Ning spoke up. “When you were fortunate enough to acquire the Voidsea Jadeseal, we agreed that although Ninedust and I would do our best to protect you, if we were unable to do so you would immediately hand the seal over. That way, we’d be able to avoid a true disaster befalling us.”

“Yes.” Emperor Solesky had a hint of embarrassment on his face.

“But in reality? Both Ninedust and I were at the brink of death, but you entered secluded meditation and surrounded yourself with many layers of wards and barriers, refusing to allow anyone to disturb you at all.” Ning looked at Emperor Solesky. “Tell me. Why?”

Although Solesky was now an Eternal Emperor, Ning still viewed him as a brother. He needed an explanation.

“Ugh...” Emperor Solesky shook his head. “I admit, I’m at fault for what happened! We did indeed agree that I would hide inside the estate while you and Ninedust would flee while defending against the attackers! To tell you the truth, when I saw the Voidsea Jadeseal I did indeed feel a strong, selfish desire to keep it for myself and never give it up to anyone else. There are no Verge-level Daolords who would be completely immune to its allure.”

Ning simply listened. He acknowledged this point; otherwise, why would so many incredible Daolords have lost their lives here? Even the likes of King Gorsch, Sectlord Timedream, and the Kingfreak had died due to this struggle.

“I made a certain decision. I chose to immediately use the Voidsea Jadeseal,” Emperor Solesky said in a low voice. “This was my plan. I was going to use the Voidsea Jadeseal to simulate a Daomerge! Since it was a

mere simulation and not an actual Daomerge, I could stop it at any moment. I didn't go into true seclusion!"

"My original plan was to finish using it up, then immediately notifying the two of you. I would then be able to swear a lifeblood oath to the others that I had already used up the Voidsea Jade seal," Emperor Solesky said. "Once those pursuing Daolords were certain that I had already used it up... although they wouldn't be happy about it, they wouldn't continue the pursuit."

Ning nodded. "What you say makes sense." If the seal was used up, then Ning, Ninedust, Badlands, and Solesky could've all sworn lifeblood oaths and informed Daolord Shaka, Daolord Snowjoy, and the others that the seal had been consumed. Their opponents would've been forced to give up, as further battle would've been pointless; the seal would've already been gone.

"After I came to that decision, I began to use the Voidsea Jade seal within a temporal acceleration estate," Emperor Solesky said. "Roughly a month later, it was used up."

"A month?" Ning's face tightened. "Then why didn't you tell me and Ninedust about it?" Back then, he and Ninedust had yet to fall into danger! If they had publicized the fact that the Voidsea Jade seal had been used up, the ensuing battles would not have occurred.

"I really was planning to make it public..." Emperor Solesky had an ashamed look on his face. "But as I completed a full Daomerge simulation with the Voidsea Jade seal, the insights I gained were identical to the insights I would've gained from the real Daomerge. Certain insights I had spent countless years working on in the Dao of Water began to deepen, and towards the end I entered a very special prajna-type meditation state."

"I... really did not wish for that state to come to an end. Once the state ended, the flow of insights would've ended as well," Emperor Solesky said. "Thus, I immediately separated myself from the outside world and began the actual Daomerge, allowing myself to engage in the Daomerge while in that prajna meditative state. In the end... I succeeded at one go with my

Daomerge and gained eternity.”

Ning was silent.

“Ji Ning, I admit that I was at fault,” Emperor Solesky said in an embarrassed manner. “I was planning to listen to your call and hand it over as soon as you told me to, or immediately publicize the usage of the Voidsea Jadeseal if I was able to use it up, but... do you know how rare it is for one to enter a prajna-state like that? I could sense that I had a chance at succeeding in the Daomerge! I figured, since you had been able to hold on for a full month, you’d probably be able to hold on for another month...”

“Well. I’ve given you a lot of excuses, but in the end I was just selfish and excited. I saw a chance at the Daomerge and so I risked everything to achieve it,” Emperor Solesky said with shame.

Ning turned to stare towards the outside of the vessel, where Winesage and Palace Lord Dawnstar were flying at high speed. His feelings were very complicated right now.

Should he be angry? He simply wasn’t able to get worked up. The Voidsea Jadeseal had belonged to big brother Solesky to begin with; there was nothing wrong with him using it up! The Daomerge simulation could indeed be disrupted, and Solesky hadn’t fully secluded himself; Ning simply had to message him in order to have him come out! But he ended up in that prajna-state, a state which was incredibly rare. Most likely, no one who was about to attempt the Daomerge would choose to voluntarily end a prajna-state upon entering it. Who knew when the next chance would be?

“Ji Ning.” Solesky looked at Ning.

“No one is completely unselfish,” Ning murmured softly. “And the Daomerge is the ultimate tribulation for all Samsara Daolords. I can’t blame you for not wishing to halt a prajna-state upon entering the simulated Daomerge!”

“In the end, I still went against my promise.” Emperor Solesky remained ashamed. “I caused you and Ninedust to fall into a perilous situation.”

“You don’t owe me.” Ning shook his head. “You do owe Ninedust. He was poisoned by Sectlord Timedream’s redscatter venom.”

“Redscatter?” This name caused Emperor Solesky to feel puzzled.

“It is a terrifying poison meant for dealing with Eternal Emperors. Ninedust is suffering endless torment right now, and was in such pain that he screamed for me to kill him,” Ning said slowly.

“What?!” Emperor Solesky’s face turned pale. Ninedust was a supreme Daolord. How much pain did he have to be in, for him to ask for death?

“You were in that prajna-state of yours and refused to end it, choosing to continue with your Daomerge. I can’t blame you for that.” Ning looked at Solesky. “But big brother... you owe him.”

“I owe him, and I owe you,” Emperor Solesky said. “I won’t forget either debts.”

“I suppose the silver lining for me is that I managed to make a breakthrough,” Ning said. “And I didn’t really lose anything.” Ning spoke in a casual manner... but in truth, he had lost quite a bit. He had been forced to use up his final Sword Hegemon’s Dao-seal, after all. Not even the likes of Sectlord Timedream or Daolord Shaka had Dao-seals like that! That dominantly offensive Hegemon Dao-seal was far more rare and difficult to make than the more stable defensive-type Hegemon Dao-seals.

And in truth, Ning had long ago reached the final bottleneck and was about to make a breakthrough at any moment. Even without this near-disaster, he would’ve soon broken through. To go from the second step to the third step wasn’t all that hard, after all.

“Alright. Now I know the situation.” Ning nodded. “Realmsoul Polo won’t let you stay here forever. You should leave.”

“Alright.” Solesky nodded. He really didn’t know what else he could say.

“Oh, right. Big brother, I haven’t congratulated you yet.” Ning smiled. “Congratulations on succeeding in your Daomerge! Countless Daolords have fallen to this great tribulation, and it’s rare for even a single powerful Eternal Emperor to emerge in each generation of Daolords. Big brother,

you are now strong enough to truly wander the universe without fear for all eternity.”

Solesky revealed a slight smile as well. In his heart, he also felt quite excited... but the guilt he felt towards Ning and the others prevented him from displaying any of it. “I’ll leave now. I’ll wait for you outside the Waveshift Realm,” Emperor Solesky said.

“Alright.” Ning nodded.

Whoosh. Emperor Solesky immediately flew out of the flying vessel and towards the outside world. A rainbow tunnel soon appeared above him; clearly, Realmsoul Polo had opened it up just for him. Emperor Solesky immediately flew into the rainbow tunnel and flew out of the Waveshift Realm.

Chapter 2: The Fruits

Less than half a day after Winesage, Palace Lord Dawnstar, and Ji Ning joined forces to travel together, Ning received a message from his servant.

“Master, I just received an order from the Hegemon.” The green-robed alien located within Ning’s personal estate called out respectfully to Ning. He was responsible for maintaining contact between Ning and the Brightshore Kingdom.

“The Hegemon?” Ning asked.

“Yes. The Hegemon ordered me to deliver a message to you,” the green-robed alien said respectfully.

“Speak,” Ning said solemnly. In all these years, the Hegemon had only spoken to Ning twice. The first time was when the Hegemon had asked himself, Solewind, Greatjoy, and Firesurge to help protect Skyfire Brightshore on his journey to the alternate universe. The second time was when the Hegemon had given Ning that spacetime disc. Other than that, the Hegemon had never reached out to him.

“The Hegemon said that aside from the Voidsea Jadeseals, the Crimsonwave Temple also contains many precious fruits. The Hegemon hopes for you, Master, to harvest as many of those fruits as you can. The more the better! After you do so, the Hegemon would be willing to buy them from you using either chaos jewels, chaos nectar, rare ingredients, precious Dao-seals, rare treasures... anything is up for trade.”

Ning narrowed his eyes.

“The Hegemon also said that any treasure within the Brightshore Kingdom is up for trade. In fact, he’ll also help you negotiate for treasures held by the other organizations, including Universe treasures! So long as you have enough fruit, the Hegemon will help you trade for them,” the green-robed alien said.

“What?” No matter how calm Ning normally was, he was truly stunned now. Apparently the Brightshore Hegemon was absolutely willing to pay

any price for the sake of the fruits within the Crimsonwave Temple.

Of course, despite the enticing offer there was still no way for anyone to forcibly bind a Universe treasure. The Universe treasure had to approve of its next master! The Brightshore Kingdom's Sword Palace already had a Universe treasure, the shattered sword in its storeroom. However, to date no one had been able to bind it or be acknowledged by it. Thus, in truth that Universe treasure was of very limited value.

"The Hegemon emphasized for you to do your best to harvest as many of the fruits within the Crimsonwave Temple as you can," the green-robed alien repeated.

Ning pondered silently for a moment, then nodded slightly.

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Time went on, one day after another. Ning and the others continued to advance before finally, Ninedust completely recovered from the poisoning. In truth, he had already stopped screaming in agony by the ninth day of his torment. Clearly, his Dao-heart was slowly growing stronger in response to the agony, allowing him to repress the pain and prevent him from screaming by the ninth day.

"Come, come, come! Brother Ninedust's Dao-heart has been rendered truly incredible by this misfortune. In the future, your chances at the Daomerge shall be significantly better than they were before this. Cheers!" Palace Lord Dawnstar offered a toast.

Aboard the flying vessel where Ning, Dawnstar, Winesage, Badlands, and Ninedust. They were seated in a circle and drinking together.

In truth, this journey was quite an exhausting one for Dawnstar and Winesage. The closer they moved to Crimsonwave Temple, the more dangerous the path became, after all. Thankfully, Ning, Dawnstar, and Winesage all joined together. This alliance of the top three Daolords allowed them to advance much faster than they otherwise would have.

"Haha." Ninedust roared with laughter. "This was indeed a blessing in disguise for me. My Dao-heart was strengthened by quite a bit. However,

to tell you the truth... when I think back to the torment I suffered, I would rather have gone without this 'blessing'. Ugh. What torture that was! Right, Darknorth. Where's Solesky? Where the hell is he? I have one hell of a bone to pick with that guy!" A cold light flashed through Ninedust's eyes.

"He's succeeded in his Daomerge and gained eternity," Winesage said with a sigh.

"He gained eternity?" Ninedust stared.

"Envious, right?" Palace Lord Dawnstar said. Clearly, he felt quite jealous as well.

"Darknorth, how did he end up gaining eternity? Did he use up the Voidsea Jadeseal when we were fighting for our lives?" Ninedust immediately asked.

"This is what happened..." Ning began to narrate the details of what had happened to Ninedust.

Ninedust ground his teeth as he listened. "That son of a bitch. He entered a prajna-state, then went into a secluded meditation and attempted his Daomerge. There's nothing wrong with that in principle, but he completely screwed me over." Although he was still quite furious, the rage he felt towards Solesky didn't blaze quite as hot as it had in the past.

"He'll definitely repay you for what he owes you," Ning said.

"Right, what happened after that? Your aura seems to be far more powerful than it was in the past! And how did you end up alongside Winesage and Palace Lord Dawnstar? What the hell happened?" Ninedust asked.

"After you were hit by the poison, Darknorth immediately charged out to face those four supreme Daolords by himself... and he broke through to become a supreme Daolord as well, sweeping all four of them away! He beat Daolord Shaka and Daolord Snowjoy into a retreat, with the Kingfreak and Sectlord Timedream perishing to him," Palace Lord

Dawnstar said with a smile.

“Whaaaat?” Ninedust was shocked. He couldn’t help but turn and smack Ning on the chest, then say with a laugh, “Not bad! You actually killed Kingfreak and Timedream? Nice, nice, nice! At least you took revenge on my behalf. Heeeey... doesn’t that mean you are now stronger than me?” Ninedust stared at him.

“The current Daolord rankings have brother Winesage ranked as number one, Darknorth as number two, and me having fallen to number three,” Palace Lord Dawnstar said with a laugh.

“The three of you are the top three Daolords of all the Endless Territories. I’m now the weakest one?” Ninedust rubbed his jaw, then glanced sideways at the nearby Badlands. “Oh wait. There’s one guy weaker than me here.”

“My skills lie in the Dao of Numerancy, not in battle,” Daolord Badlands said calmly. “If I chose to go into hiding, you wouldn’t even be able to find me, Ninedust.”

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This group of Daolords continued their advance. More than a year went by, with them moving closer and closer to Crimsonwave Temple.

The Endless Territories. Vastheaven Territory. Vastheaven Palace.

“Darknorth.” A sonorous voice boomed out within Vastheaven Palace.

“Eh?” The golden-robed avatar of Ning, along with the avatars of Emperor Solesky and Daolord Battlemaster, all flew into the air and into the skies. They saw a gold-furred alien slowly walk towards them, causing space to tremble and ripple around him like streams of water. He seemed to walk slowly, but his movements were terrifyingly fast, far faster than the movements of Daolord Shaka or the Radiant King. He reached Vastheaven Palace in the blink of an eye.

“Milord Emperor...?” Ning spoke out.

“Mind if we sit down to have a chat?” the gold-furred alien said.

“Of course! Please come in and sit down, fellow Daoist.” Emperor Solesky’s avatar immediately felt a sense of pressure; clearly, this gold-furred alien was far more powerful than them. Soon, Ning’s avatar and Solesky’s avatar led the gold-furred alien into the palace.

“My name is Goldisle,” the gold-furred alien said. “Solesky, now that you have become an Emperor, I’m certain that you’ll soon be paying a visit to the Palace of Immortals. Darknorth, as a supreme Daolord, once this matter in the Waveshift Realm is over you should also come pay the Palace of Immortals a visit. By then, you’ll both know who I am.”

Ning and Solesky exchanged a glance. They knew that this person was most likely a high-ranking member of the Palace of the Immortals.

“The foundation of the Palace of Immortals is far mightier than that of the other five powers.” The gold-furred alien looked at Ning. “Darknorth, based on my estimations, you should have already been contacted by Hegemon Brightshore of the Brightshore Kingdom. He probably wants those fruits in the Crimsonwave Temple very badly! I’ll tell you this – the Palace of Immortal wants those fruits just as much.”

“Why can’t you go harvest it for yourself?” Ning asked.

“Only Daolords are able to enter Crimsonwave Temple,” the gold-furred alien explained, then continued, “In truth, Crimsonwave Temple was sent here by Emperor Waveshift. It should technically belong to our Dao Alliance, but since Emperor Waveshift established a rule that only Daolords may enter, we shall follow the rules he set. The Dao Alliance has the most Daolords, and I am confident that we are able to pay the best price.”

“Any treasure! We’ll make available any of the treasures within the Palace of Immortal’s treasury for you to choose from. So long as you have enough of the fruit, you can trade for whatever you wish.” The golden-furred alien continued, “Even if the treasure you seek is outside of the Endless Territories and is in the hands of other organizations in otherverses, we’ll work to help you find whatever it is you tell us you need, no matter how rare it is. But of course, you have to procure enough fruit

for us.” The golden-furred alien looked at Ning.

Ning felt stunned. This was one hell of a struggle!

“I can promise to you that the Dao Alliance will give you a higher price than any of the other five organizations can offer.” The golden-furred alien smiled. “Based on what I know, Darknorth, you are quite talented in the [Heartsword] art as well, yes? Here’s a copy of the complete [Heartsword] sutra; consider it a show of sincerity from the Dao Alliance.”

Ning was secretly amazed. Not at being given a free copy of the [Heartsword] sword-arts; although it was valuable, giving him a copy for free cost the Dao Alliance absolutely nothing at all. For them to know that he was skilled in the [Heartsword] sword-arts, however... this was impressive. It must be remembered that he had relied on the [Heartsword] sword-arts to attain the rank of Swordlord within the Sword Palace! Very few people even in the Brightshore Kingdom knew of this. The Dao Alliance’s intelligence network truly was incredible.

“The Dao Alliance won’t force you to do anything. Let it all be of your own free will,” the gold-furred alien said with a smile.

Chapter 3: Separate Paths

“I’ve said everything I came to say.” The golden-furred alien rose to his feet. “I’ll be waiting for you outside the Waveshift Realm, Darknorth.” He then turned and took a single step forwards, space twisting and distorting about him as he completely disappeared.

Ji Ning was quite shocked. This sort of dimensional teleportation was something vastly beyond his capabilities. He mused to himself, “This Eternal Emperor named Goldisle has to be at least on the same level as the eight lords of the Sacred Cities.”

“However... I really will have to acquire as many of the fruits within Crimsonwave Temple as I can. My protective divine ability, the Sword Hegemon’s secret art, and the ingredients I need for the Northbow swords... most likely, I’ll have to rely on the Crimsonwave Temple’s fruits to procure what I need for them.” Ning calculated silently to himself, “I need to upgrade my protective divine ability a bit more, while the Northbow swords are currently only providing a significant enhancement to the Blood Drop stance. My weaknesses are quite glaring. A true Universe treasure is perfect in any manner.”

“And the Hegemon’s secret art. My nine novessence arts are no longer cutting it; they are of increasingly limited use to me,” Ning mused.

The nine novessence arts had been created by Daolord Allgod. When Ning had been at the first step, he had no access to any formations and thus used them in brute-force attacks of incredible power.

Upon becoming a Daolord of the Second Step, Ning’s Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang became of tremendous use to him. Even when Ning didn’t actually use the nine novessence arts, the sword-intent of the Omega Sword Dao – Yin Yang had reached twenty to thirty percent of the power of the arts.

Now that he was a Daolord of the Third Step, the might of his Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang was roughly at sixty to seventy percent of the power of his nine novessence arts.

As Ning's level of insight increased, his Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang would grow increasingly powerful. The nine novessence arts themselves, however, wouldn't change at all. He'd eventually have to discard them.

"I'm already a Daolord of the Third Step! For now, the nine novessence arts are still of use to me, but once I become a Daolord of the Fourth Step... by then, they'll be of negligible use," Ning mused. "I need stronger secret arts."

"My protective divine ability... the Sword Hegemon's secret arts... the Northbow swords... all of them require rare materials!" Ning felt rather eager. "Perhaps these fruits might even move me closer to reviving my wife."

Reviving Yu Wei. This was what Ji Ning truly wanted above all else.

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The Waveshift Realm. Ning, Ninedust, Winesage, Dawnstar, and Badlands made for a truly formidable alliance. With Daolord Badlands helping guide them away from many dangerous areas, they were actually the first group to arrive before Crimsonwave Temple.

"There it is. Crimsonwave Temple." Ning and the other four raised their heads to look at the ancient temple before them. The temple was a mixture of gold and black, and they could sense the aura of age which emanated from it. Three strange characters hovered in the air above the temple, and they seemed quite similar to the azureflower seal script as well as the Dreamdust script. Anyone who saw them would immediately understand that the three characters represented the name 'Crimsonwave Temple'.

Ning stared at the three characters for a long period of time. He could sense that every single character contained boundless mysteries within them.

"The azureflower seal gave me access to the azureflower mist energy. The Dreamdust script was of assistance to my mastery over illusions. As for the Crimsonwave Temple... I can sense that these three characters are also filled with endless mysteries. Analyzing them, however, will be quite

taxing.” Ning carefully examined them. The ‘crimson’ character seemed to fill the skies with a blazing red aura. The ‘wave’ character made Ning feel as though he saw an endless sea of waves. The ‘temple’ character seemed to emanate an extremely solemn and stately aura, almost as though Ning was standing at the helm of an endless swarm of soldiers.

This script was an extremely advanced, high-level one that was far more advanced than any language which was commonly used in the Endless Territories. Every single one of these three characters contained extremely high-level mysteries of the Dao within them.

“So we were the first to reach Crimsonwave Temple.” Ninedust roared with laughter. “Everyone, I imagine you all know by now how precious the fruits within Crimsonwave Temple are! We Ancient cultivators also wish to acquire these fruits. I hope that you’ll be willing to sell us any of the fruits you find, but of course it’ll all be up to you.”

“Everyone seems to want the fruits within the Crimsonwave Temple.” Palace Lord Dawnstar said casually, “But for us Daolords, what really matters is still the Voidsea Jadeseals.”

“Agreed.” Ning, Winesage, Ninedust, and Badlands all nodded. The fruits were probably of grave importance to Eternal Emperors, but Ning and the others here were all Daolords! To them, the supreme Daomerge treasure known as the Voidsea Jadeseal was what truly mattered.

“Come, let’s go take a look.”

“We are the first to arrive. We need to seize this opportunity to find the seals.”

“First come, first serve.”

They all laughed merrily as they entered Crimsonwave Temple.

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Crimsonwave Temple was an incredibly vast place. As soon as the five of them entered, they turned pale.

Right in front of them sat two incredibly large corpses, each 540,000

meters tall. Their enormous black feet were pointed directly at the group, the toenails looking dagger-sharp. The two corpses were completely black in color and completely nude, covered only in light green fur. Their faces were very ugly, while their eyes were flecked with a dark-gold color. The skin on their heads, however, looked almost like a strange hat formed by scales. The awesome auras emanating from the two corpses were so powerful as to cause Ning and the others to tremble.

“These are Hegemonic auras!” Ning, Ninedust, Dawnstar, Winesage, and Badlands traded glances, their faces pale.

“Were the two of them Hegemons?” Ninedust spoke out.

“The auras are so strong that even in death, they bring me a sense of pressure.” Ning said solemnly, “They should be Hegemons.”

“Why don’t they have any armor or clothes on them at all?” Dawnstar was puzzled.

“Were they perhaps looted?” The nearby Winesage chuckled. “The armor used by Hegemons are undoubtedly extraordinary.”

“Something’s wrong.” Daolord Badlands frowned. “These two corpses look absolutely identical!”

“Right.” Ning and the others noticed this as well. There were some members of the same race who looked very similar to each other, and thus Ning and the others hadn’t paid too close attention to their appearances. But as Daolord Badlands had pointed out, these two corpses truly were absolutely identical. Even the wrinkles on their faces were identical!

Whoosh. Suddenly, a streak of rainbow light appeared in front of the entrance to Crimsonwave Temple, reforming into a towering white-robed man’s figure.

“Realmsoul Polo.” Ning and the others turned to look at him.

“Your group was the first to reach Crimsonwave Temple.” Realmsoul Polo weighed Ning’s group with his gaze, then pointed to the two corpses. “As for these two corpses... if you wish to call them ‘Hegemons’, I suppose they could just barely qualify as having reached that level. They are very

close to being comparable to Hegemons in power, after all. On the other hand, they truly can't be considered 'real' Hegemons! This is because they are the most powerful guardians which were produced by the Sithe race. The Sithe created them at enormous expense to watch over important locations, with Crimsonwave Temple definitely being one of them. That's why it had two of these guardians here! They were eventually slain and Crimsonwave Temple was conquered. After a series of twists and turns, it ended up in my master's hands."

Ning and Ninedust were secretly startled. These were the most powerful guardians produced by the Sithe? It was possible to create Hegemon-level guardians?!

Ninedust and Ning couldn't help but think back to that corpse they had seen within that cave in the Terror Starsea. That corpse had been filled with countless stone tunnels and many powerful planets. For the sake of killing that thing, two of the Hegemons of the Endless Territories had fallen!

"This is the most valuable possession my master has ever acquired, and he only gained it after experiencing countless dangers and hardships." Realmsoul Polo looked quite proud. "The other organizations of the Endless Territories could work together and still fail to acquire this Crimsonwave Temple."

"Alright. Now look over there." Realmsoul Polo pointed off into the distance.

Whoosh! Previously, the palace interior had been so dark that they were unable to see what lay at the other side of it. Crimsonwave Temple was extremely large, after all, and it was filled with many regions. Now, three tunnels filled with dark blue light suddenly appeared.

"These three tunnels lead to three different locations within Crimsonwave Temple. You can try them out for yourself... and if you are lucky, perhaps you'll be able to obtain the fruits within Crimsonwave Temple." Realmsoul Polo said calmly, "However, acquiring those fruits is extremely difficult, just as difficult as acquiring the Voidsea Jadeseals will

be.”

“Let’s go.” Ning and the other four didn’t hesitate at all, immediately moving towards the three tunnels. For now, it was still the Voidsea Jadeseals which truly enticed them.

“Everyone, we should part ways here. Otherwise, if we jointly acquire the jade seals, there will be no way to divide them up,” Winesage said. “I’ll choose this tunnel.” He chose one of the three and moved towards it.

“It’ll be up to your own respective skills.” Palace Lord Dawnstar chose the leftmost tunnel.

“Ninedust, let’s take the right one,” Ning said.

Ninedust hesitated. “Darknorth, there should be a Voidsea Jadeseal in each tunnel. If we go together, how should we split it?” They were good brothers, but they had to agree on something in advance. Otherwise, this might end up harming their relationship.

Chapter 4: Nine Sections

“If it wasn’t for you, there’s no way we would’ve been able to protect the first Voidsea Jadeseal, and big brother Solesky wouldn’t have become an Eternal Emperor,” Ji Ning said. “This next Voidsea Jadeseal will be yours! Haha, but of course if we find a second one it’ll go to me.”

Ninedust frowned. “Darknorth...” There were only three Voidsea Jadeseals left. It was virtually impossible for them to acquire two of them, especially seeing as how Winesage and Dawnstar had already gone into those two tunnels. Later on, even more supreme Daolords would arrive. For them to even acquire a single Voidsea Jadeseal would be a stroke of tremendous fortune. Two? Their chances were very, very low.

“Darknorth, you’ll also need a Voidsea Jadeseal in the future when you attempt the Daomerge in the future,” Ninedust said. “I think it’s better for us to just leave it up to speed and strength. May the best man win?”

“Enough, Ninedust. If you view me as your friend, then stop standing on ceremony with me,” Ning said seriously.

Ninedust looked at Ning. A moment later, he smiled. “Alright!” In this moment, Ninedust felt true gratitude in his heart. The Daomerge was, without question, the greatest tribulation any and every Daolord would ever face! He firmly memorized this moment of grace and buried it deep within his heart.

Ning relaxed as well. Finally, he had convinced the man! Ever since they had entered the Waveshift Realm, Ninedust had been their mainstay in battle. The fight against Fiendqueen Windrain, the escape with the Voidsea Jadeseal in tow... each time, it had been Ninedust who had taken the brunt of the fighting and done the most work. Was Ning supposed to just take the next Voidsea Jadeseal for himself, now that he had broken through in power? Ning simply couldn’t do such a thing! It would violate his Dao-heart!

In addition, of the various supreme Daolords who had gathered here, Ning cared the least about the Voidsea Jadeseals. This was because the

Voidsea Jadeseals were not omnipotent. Second-tier Daolords would be able to use a Voidsea Jadeseal to fully simulate a Daomerge, but supreme first-tier Daolords would only be able to do a partial simulation!

As for Ning himself? He was just a Daolord of the Third Step. When he became a Daolord of the Fourth Step, his Omega Sword Dao would become even more overpowered; he would most likely be at the same level of power as the eight lords of the Sacred Cities. If he succeeded in his Daomerge, he would eclipse even Hegemons in power!

If the Voidsea Jadeseals weren't able to do a full simulation for even the other 'supreme' Daolords, it probably wouldn't even be able to simulate a tenth of his own Daomerge.

However... although he cared the 'least' about the Voidsea Jadeseals, that wasn't saying much; he still cared immensely! Even though a jade seal would only allow him to simulate a very small portion of his Daomerge, it would still save him a bit of time when he attempted the real Daomerge. That extra window of time and opportunity could well determine whether his Daomerge would succeed or fail!

"Let's find and seize the Voidsea Jadeseal first. As for the fruits, we'll worry about them later after we learn more about them," Ning said.

"Alright." Ninedust nodded. Right now, even if Ning asked for all the fruits to go to him, Ninedust wouldn't mind.

Swoosh! Swoosh! They quickly flew deeper into the tunnel of dark blue light they had chosen.

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Rumble... as they flew through the dark blue tunnel, they felt almost as though they were flying through a dimensional doorway. Whoosh! An enormous world appeared in front of them as they flew out of the tunnel.

The enormous world had a dimensional walkway within it, with countless armored soldiers clustered on each of the two sides of the tunnel. At the end of this levitating pathway was an ancient throne, while a golden globe of light hovered above the entire pathway.

“Eh?” Ning and Ninedust traded a glance. A dimensional walkway?” Ning was surprised. When he and Ninedust had been in the Eastroad Territory, they had traversed a dimensional walkway and ended up being teleported into that estate deep within the Terror Starsea. Who would’ve thought they would encounter another one here in Crimsonwave Temple?

“There are some differences.” Ninedust stared off into the distance. The dimensional walkway within the Eastroad Sect had been surrounded by empty space, which was why it had been named the Void Pathway! But this vast world before them seemed far more real, and its aura was far more powerful. The area around this dimensional walkway was covered with dark soil and dirt, with many strange trees sprouting from the ground.

The trees were all very short and stooped, and the branches were twisted like the bodies of sea serpents. Only a single tree would grow within a million kilometer region, and every single tree only bore dark blue fruits. The fruits emanated an enticing fragrance that spread out in every direction.

“This enormous world has a total of 108,000 of these trees,” Ninedust said. As he spoke, he reached out with his right hand. Whooooosh. His right hand expanded to become a million kilometers long as he reached out towards the closest tree, seeking to pluck some of the fruit..

Suddenly, a barrier of light that seemed like the heavenly firmament itself sprang up. When Ninedust’s right hand touched the barrier, he was completely unable to move past it in the slightest.

“Realmsoul Polo already said that harvesting the fruit will be just as hard as acquiring the Voidsea Jadeseals,” the nearby Ning said.

“This barrier is quite strong. I wasn’t able to shake it at all with my attempt just now.” Ninedust shook his head.

Whoosh. Rainbow light gathered next to them, forming into a white-robed man. It was Realmsoul Polo, who smiled. “So the two of you have reached the first world.”

“Realmsoul.” Nine and Ninedust both looked at him.

“Look over here.” Realmsoul Polo pointed towards the left, then waved his hand. Instantly, the mist far off in the distance to the left began to dissipate, revealing yet another dimensional hallway that was also covered with countless warriors. Winesage was standing right there, with a second Realmsoul Polo by his side.

“Winesage?” Ning and Ninedust were both surprised.

“Now look here.” Realmsoul Polo now pointed towards the right, causing the mist off in the distance to once more dissipate and reveal a third dimensional walkway. This one was filled with just as many of those armored warriors, with Dawnstar standing amongst them.

“Palace Lord Dawnstar?” Ning and Ninedust were starting to understand.

“The two of you, along with Winesage and Dawnstar, have separately entered three of the major sections within the first world of the Crimsonwave Realm,” Realmsoul Polo said. “The different regions within the first world are all linked together, and so the two of you should move to acquire the Voidsea Jadeseals as quickly as possible. If you waste too much time, the others might end up winning it.”

“Where is the Voidsea Jadeseal?” Ning asked.

“Look at the throne over there.” The realmsoul pointed towards the black throne at the end of the dimensional walkway. “When you finish breaking through the many waves of warriors barring your path and reach that throne, you’ll be teleported to the second world. The Voidsea Jadeseals are within the second world.”

“Understood.” Ning’s eyes lit up, as did Ninedust’s.

“Then the fruits here...” Ning immediately changed to the next topic of conversation.

“If you wish to harvest the fruit, you must first acquire one of the command seals,” Realmsoul Polo said. “The command seals are in the third world.”

Ning and Ninedust exchanged a glance. The Voidsea Jadeseals were in

the second world, while the command seals needed to harvest the fruit were in the third world? That meant that harvesting the fruit would probably be more difficult than acquiring the Voidsea Jade seals.

“Let’s move.” It didn’t really matter; they had to seize every moment. Winesage was more powerful than both of them, and he would probably advance more quickly. After he won a Voidsea Jade seal, he’d probably go after one of the others.

Boom! A pillar of golden light descended upon them, illuminating the six armored warriors in the first row before them. The six warriors opened their eyes, now glowing with golden light, then charged towards Ning and Ninedust with weapons at the ready.

Ning transformed into his three-headed, six-armed mode and drew all six of his Northbow swords. As for Ninedust, he brought his longstaff to the ready and immediately charged forwards as well.

Boom! Boom! Boom! As soon as the battle erupted, Ning and Ninedust felt a sense of pressure. “Every single one of these warriors is comparable to a second-tier Daolord.” Ning immediately came to this conclusion. An attack from six second-tier Daolords was more than enough to cause most supreme Daolords to feel a sense of pressure.

“Heartworld projection, descend! Novessence arts, manifest!” Ning didn’t hesitate or hold back in the slightest. His mighty heartworld projection came crashing down, suppressing his foes. As for his nine novessence arts, they followed the principles of his Omega Sword Dao – Yin-Yang as they furiously wrapped around the warriors, rendering them almost immobile. However, right at this moment even more of the golden light rained down from the skies. This time, it covered virtually the entire dimensional walkway... and as it did, it seemed to completely block off the power of Ning’s nine novessence arts and his heartworld projection, rendering them useless.

“What the hell? It actually blocked off my heartworld projection and the nine novessence arts?” Ning raised his head to stare at the golden globe of light above them.

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

The six armored warriors let out furious, murderous shouts as they began to launch attacks at Ning and Ninedust without any hesitation at all.

Ning and Ninedust exchanged a glance. The warriors they had fought in the Void Pathway within the Eastroad Sect had been much weaker. Even the warriors they had encountered at the very end were merely equivalent to the lowest-ranked second-tier Daolords in power, and they weren't able to ignore the nine novessence arts like this.

“Even the first warriors here are already comparable to second-tier Daolords,” Ning sent mentally. “And they are clearly far more numerous as well. All of them are fighting like madmen, seemingly intent on our deaths. Even my heartworld projection and nine novessence arts have been nullified. No wonder Realmsoul Polo said that only supreme Daolords even stand a chance at surviving this place! It won't be easy at all for us to survive this first world.”

Chapter 5: The Grovekeepers

Ji Ning and Ninedust clearly surpass the six warriors in power, but the six warriors had bodies comparable to top-tier Eternal treasures. Each time they were knocked backwards, they would quickly regroup and charge towards the two once again.

“Why the hell are they continuing to attack?” Ninedust sent mentally.

“We’re clearly overpowering them, but they continue to press the assault.” Ning frowned as well. “Let’s just keep advancing. Forget about them.”

“Alright.” Ning and Ninedust clearly held the upper hand, and so they smashed their way through and continued the advance. As they did, however, six more rays of light shone down from that golden globe above them. Instantly, six more warriors opened their golden eyes and began to charge towards them. The six original warriors didn’t let up the pursuit either, continuing to press the assault. Now, there were a total of twelve warriors assaulting them.

“That’s not good.” Ning and Ninedust both turned pale. “We’re clearly stronger than them, but they aren’t even alive. Their bodies can’t be damaged in the slightest. If they continue to harass us like this, if we advance we’ll have to face eighteen of them, then twenty four of them. More and more of them will come to life and start attacking us.” Ninedust began to grow anxious. “Even if we work together, we won’t be able to last for very long if a hundred of these things attack us.”

“Agreed.” Ning was worried about the same thing.

Boom! Ning attacked in a ghostly manner, his six arms striking out with six Northbow swords and striking one of the warriors. That warrior was knocked flying backwards until it flew outside the dimensional walkway. Its golden eyes instantly dimmed. Moments later, some sort of invisible string seemed to jerk it back into the dimensional walkway where it rejoined the other warriors. This time, however, it no longer attacked.

“Aha!” Ning’s eyes lit up. “Knock them off the walkway. That’s all we

need to do!”

“Oh, is that it?” Ninedust was delighted as well.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The two of them were clearly much stronger. Now that they knew what to do, they began to focus on knocking the armored warriors out of the dimensional walkway. In each case, the eyes of the warriors would go dim before they were pulled back into the ranks of the other warriors, now completely immobile.

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Ning and the others continued to press the advance. Each time, they faced a total of six warriors! Some specialized in sword-arts, some specialized in whip-arts, some specialized in staff-arts, some specialized in axe-arts, some specialized in long-distance attacks... Ning and Ninedust were faced with all sorts of varied attacks.

Ning and Ninedust continued to press the assault for more than three days. Finally... from this day forth, they had to fight seven warriors each time!

Seven warriors... eight warriors... the number slowly began to rise. Each warrior continued to merely have the power of a second-tier Daolord, but the way they worked together became increasingly intricate and marvelous! Knocking them off the dimensional walkway became harder and harder, especially given how incredibly large the walkway was. The width alone was roughly a million kilometers! Each time, Ning and Ninedust had to fight with their full power.

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Nine months later.

Twenty-six of the armored warriors were surrounding and assaulting the two of them in perfect concert. Their bodies were completely invulnerable, allowing them to focus on attacks without needing to defend at all. Ning and Ninedust worked together as well, slowly driving one warrior after another to the ends of the dimensional walkway. They fought for more than two hours before finally sending the last one flying.

“I’m so done right now. I’m exhausted.” Ninedust slumped to the ground. “I need a break. I can’t take any more, I really can’t.”

Ning sat down as well, staring at what lay ahead of them. They had only traversed roughly half of the dimensional walkway, and the further they advanced the more difficult it would be.

“This is torture.” Ninedust shook his head. “We’ve been fighting nonstop for nine full months, and I’ve been using chaos jewels to replenish my energy. Sure, I have plenty of them, but fighting at full power for this long is mentally exhausting. I’m more tired right now than I ever have been in my entire life. How about you, Darknorth?”

“I’m kind of tired as well,” Ning said. In truth, he wasn’t nearly as bad off. He was a Heartforce Cultivator, after all, and his close combat skills were exquisite. This was why he wasn’t as exhausted as Ninedust was. Still, Ning elected to rest alongside Ninedust for a time, as the two were able to advance faster when fighting together. If he tried to fight by himself, he’d move much more slowly.

“Hahaha...” Suddenly, a deep, rumbling laugh rang out from the distant black soil. Ning and Ninedust sat up straight in surprise as they turned to stare at the black soil off in the distance.

Suddenly, the black, earthy ground began to slowly bulge upwards, forming into a humanoid figure of dark soil. The black earth golem was the size of a mountain, and he cracked his mouth into a grin. “Haha! Tired already, kids? Honestly, the two of you really don’t know your limits. Why have you come to attempt this pathway by yourselves? You should work in groups of four or five. Wouldn’t that be much faster?”

“Who are you, senior?” Ninedust called out.

“Me? I was manufactured by the Sithe. I’ve been here my entire life, taking care of these trees. The Sithe called me the ‘Grovekeeper’.” The black earth golem boomed with laughter. “But the Sithe were wiped out long ago, and my current master is Emperor Waveshift. Of course, my mission remains the same – to take care of these trees. The nine regions within Crimsonwave Temple have a total of nine Grovekeepers, and I’m

one of them.”

Ning and Ninedust both nodded slightly.

“Senior,” Ning called out, “Who were the Sithe, exactly? They seem to have been quite powerful.”

“Powerful? Hah! Of course they were powerful! Their war encompassed countless realms. I don’t even know how many of you cultivators died as a result of it.” The black earth golem continued, “But of course, the Sithe were still defeated in the end. They were wiped out! The Crimsonwave Temple experienced quite a few things before ending up in Emperor Waveshift’s hands.”

Ning and Ninedust were intrigued. So the great battle in the Terror Starsea known as the ‘Dawn War’ had been fought against the Sithe race?

“The Sithe paid an unbelievable price to create Crimsonwave Temple,” the black earth golem said. “Crimsonwave Temple holds more marvels than you can imagine, and it was used to plant all of these divine trees around us! The nine regions here represent nine different types of divine trees, and each type is incredibly useful. The Sithe were completely wiped out, with their most powerful experts being completely slaughtered and their treasures taken away. That was also what happened to Crimsonwave Temple.”

“Their most powerful experts were all wiped out?” Ning and Ninedust couldn’t help but sigh. The Sithe had been incredibly powerful, so powerful that they were able to create Hegemon-level guardians and locations like Crimsonwave Temple! And yet, all of their supreme experts had been wiped out, essentially driving their race to extinction. In the end, for any race, what truly mattered was the presence and existence of their supreme experts.

“Did Emperor Waveshift set down the dimensional walkway, or did the Sithe?” Ning asked.

“The Sithe, of course.” The black earth golem explained, “Emperor Waveshift certainly doesn’t have the ability to do so! The Sithe used these dimensional walkways to train and temper their Daolords. All of these

varied golems here provide an excellent source of combat experience, after all.”

Ning and Ninedust were startled. Right. It made sense. This place was indeed a superb place to train. Ning had only recently become a Daolord of the Third Step, but he was lacking in actual combat experience. As he fought against all of these warriors, Ning had accumulated more and more actual battle experience and as a result was able to discover some of the weaknesses still inherent to his sword-arts. Upon discovering those weaknesses, he was able to find a way to improve his sword-arts and thus more quickly move towards becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step.

As for Ninedust, he would be able to come up with even more powerful techniques. Daolord Shaka, the Radiant King... these ‘supreme Daolords’ all had reached the same level of enlightenment into the Dao, so why was it that they varied so much in power? It was because they all had developed different attacks!

Ning’s Dao was that of the Omega, and thus it represented the true apex of what was possible. This was why, whenever he wanted to truly upgrade his technique, he would have to first reach a higher level of enlightenment. This wasn’t true for the others.

“I believe the Sithe had many similar locations which they used to train Daolords,” the black earth golem said. “Their Daolords were all extremely powerful, with many reaching the ‘supreme’ level of power. Unfortunately, their ambitions were too vast. They sought to enslave all cultivators and take control over the destinies of all living things.”

“And so, in the end they had to be wiped out.” The black earth golem shook his head. “Let me give you another word of advice. It’ll be virtually impossible for the two of you to fight through to the third world by yourselves. I urge you to work together with a few more supreme Daolords.”

“Alright. Thank you.” Both Ning and Ninedust nodded. At present, what they really cared about was the Voidsea Jadesal in the second world. The command seals in the third world were of secondary concern.

“The various fruit trees within the nine major regions all ripen at different intervals, going from every 30,000 chaos cycles to every 100,000 chaos cycles,” the black earth golem said. “This is why Crimsonwave Temple will only be opened up once every 30,000 chaos cycles at most! However, this is the first time Crimsonwave Temple has been opened up in a very long time, and so all of the fruits in all nine regions are ripe for the harvesting. Seize the opportunity! If you miss it, you’ll have to wait another 30,000 chaos cycles... and by then, you’ll only have access to the fruits in two of the regions.”

Chapter 6: Command Seals

Anywhere from 30,000 chaos cycles to 100,000 chaos cycles? Ji Ning and Ninedust exchanged a glance, the same thought running through both their minds: when the competition over the Voidsea Jadeseals concluded, the two of them would definitely have to do their best to acquire some of the fruit.

Ji Ning felt particularly eager. Although the Voidsea Jadeseal was perhaps more valuable, Ning also knew that it would be of limited use to him. The Daomerge for his Omega Sword Dao was simply going to be so incredibly difficult that he felt zero confidence in his abilities to succeed in it. As a result, he viewed the fruits with great importance as well.

Given how badly the various Hegemons and the Dao Alliance wanted the fruits, they might be of use to him in reviving his wife. As for the Daomerge? If he failed, he'd die. By now, Ning had seen past both life and death. If he could revive his wife and then happily live together alongside her and their daughter Brightmoon for over 100,000 chaos cycles, he really wouldn't mind failing his Daomerge. His greatest wish was to bring his wife back. Ordinary mortals were only able to live for a hundred years; to be able to spend over 100,000 chaos cycles alongside his loved ones was a true blessing. What did he have to complain about?

"Dare I ask, senior," Ning said, "How many of those fruit-picking command seals are there?"

"A total of nine in total, and they are each attuned to one of the nine regions," the black earth golem said. "Each of the nine regions holds a different types of tree within them. Once you earn a command seal, you'll be able to see all of the divine trees and fruits located within a certain region."

"How much fruit is within each region?" Ning and Ninedust were surprised.

"Well... let's use this current region, the third region, as an example. If you can acquired the third command seal, then I'll harvest all 108,000

fruits on your behalf and give them to you,” the black earth golem said.

Ning immediately decided that he had to do his absolute utmost to acquire the command seals! Every single command seal represented an enormous number of fruits.

“Senior,” Ninedust immediately asked, “What good are these fruits? What can they be used for?”

“Pill-making!” The black earth golem explained, “They can be used to forge certain legendary pills that will drive any Eternal Emperors mad with desire.”

Ning asked, “Senior, which of the fruits in the nine regions are the most valuable?” Since there were nine command seals in total, he’d definitely have to try and find the most valuable one.

“Hey, this kid’s pretty smart.” The black earth golem chortled. “Then I’ll go ahead and tell you – the ninth command seal is the most valuable one. The fruits in the ninth region ripen once every 100,000 chaos cycles! The sixth, seventh, and eighth command seals are equivalent in value; those fruits ripen once every 90,000 chaos cycles! The third, fourth, and fifth command seals correspond to fruits that ripen once every 60,000 chaos cycles, while the fruits for the first and second command seals are the least valuable, ripening once every 30,000 chaos cycles.”

Ning’s eyes lit up as he memorized this. “Thank you, senior.”

“Darknorth, if we join forces we should be able to seize at least a few of those command seals,” Ninedust said.

“Haha.... quite a few supreme Daolords will be taking part in this. Count your blessings if you can even seize one of them,” the black earth golem laughed merrily. He then quickly dissipated, his body reverting to chunks of dirt that fell down to the ground.

“That little chat with the Grovekeeper really brought my spirits up,” Ninedust chortled. “Let’s keep charging.”

“Right.” Ning was filled with eagerness as well. “Attack!” The two charged forwards, side-by-side.

After chatting with the Grovekeeper, Ning now understood more about this place. This was a place which the Sithe had used to train their Daolords and give them more combat experience, helping them discover flaws in their techniques. Naturally, there was no way they would allow heartworld projections or secret arts to be used, as that would defeat the entire purpose.

From this alone, it seemed clear that the many varied techniques these warriors used would indeed give Ning many new insights into his Omega Sword Dao.

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At the entrance to the Crimsonwave Temple.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! One figure after another charged through the entrance, not even wanting to waste time admiring the characters 'Crimson' 'Wave' 'Temple' above them.

"Eh?" There were seven figures in total, and they all stared in shock at the two hideous, towering, black-skinned, green-furred, golden-eyed figures in front of them. The aura in particular caused all seven of these supreme Daolords to shudder.

"Hegemons?" All seven of them were stunned.

Streams of rainbow light manifested next to them, resolving into a white-robed man who smiled at them. "Do not be alarmed. These two are not Hegemons, but they did have power comparable to a Hegemon's. They are the most powerful guardians which were produced by the Sithe race, who created them at enormous expense to watch over Crimsonwave Temple. However, the two of them were killed and Crimsonwave Temple ended up in my master's hands."

The seven supreme Daolords were just as stunned as Ning had been when he had heard this information. Realmsoul Polo couldn't help but feel smug; he was extremely proud of his master.

"Where are Winesage and Darknorth?" A silver-robed figure amongst the seven spoke out. This was Palace Lord Cloudwalker.

“They’ve gone inside to seek out the Voidsea Jadeseals. These three corridors head to three different places, and there is a Voidsea Jadeseal at the end of each.” Realmsoul Polo pointed towards three deep blue hallways that appeared at the other side of the temple. The seven supreme Daolords instantly turned anxious upon hearing this. The realmsoul continued, “But don’t be impatient; the Voidsea Jadeseals are not so easily won. Although you’ve arrived nearly a year later than them, you still stand a very good chance at earning the seals. But of course, that’s only if you work together.”

“Which tunnels did they choose?” Daolord Dreamlord, bloodblade in his arms, spoke out in a cold voice.

“They separated and chose to go through all three tunnels,” Realmsoul Polo said. “The rest is up to you and luck.” After finishing his words, he dissipated.

The seven supreme Daolords in the temple exchanged a glance. “Damn the two of them. Winesage and Darknorth repeatedly used their heartworld projections to slow us down, forcing us to gather together to resist them in unison. Otherwise, we would’ve reached Crimsonwave Temple long ago.”

“Let’s cut the crap. What should we do next?”

“Have you decided where we should go?”

“We arrived later than them to begin with. If we work by ourselves, we won’t have any chance at all.”

The seven supreme Daolords weren’t fools. They quickly decided to separate up into two squads. The first squad consisted of Ninestone, Palace Lord Cloudwalker, Shaka, and Snowjoy.

The second squad consisted of Dreamlord, Tigrone, and Skyshatter.

“Which one should we choose? They’ve already gone up ahead of us. I wonder which path Winesage choose?” Both squads worried the most about running into Winesage. Even someone as incredibly powerful as Ning, who was able to suppress the ‘old’ Winesage in might, had been

completely crushed by Winesage when the latter had used his Universe treasure. Ning's only choice had to be to rely on the speed and concealing properties of his Shadowless evasion art in order to escape.

"If we run into Winesage, we'll be in serious trouble." This is what both squads were worried about.

"Based on my understanding of Winesage..." Daolord Skyshatter had an ugly scar on his face, and his voice was very cold. "Although he looks calm and collected, he's an extremely arrogant and domineering person who views himself as without peer amongst Daolords! Now that he has a Universe treasure, he's only going to feel even more arrogant than he did in the past. He would naturally choose the central hallway."

"Mm. Then let's avoid that one." There really was no other options; the Waveshift Realm placed tight restrictions on spacetime techniques, and the situation inside Crimsonwave Temple was even worse. It was completely impossible for them to use temporal inversion to see what happened here.

"Then we'll take the left," Palace Lord Cloudwalker said.

"We'll take the right," Daolord Dreamlore said.

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The dimensional walkway of the first world inside the Crimsonwave Temple. Ning and Ninedust had already battled their way past countless warriors, but more waves of those warriors continued to assail them. Right now, there was a total of twenty-nine warriors surrounding and assaulting them.

Whooooosh. The Ninedust Sectlord transformed into an enormous wave of water, his invulnerable aquaform having transformed into a vast sea. If he so chose, he would be able to easily transform into a sea that covered hundreds of millions of kilometers, if not more. The vast sea swept through all of the warriors, slowing them down and making it difficult for them to effectively work together.

In terms of impeding these armored warriors, the Ninedust Sectlord's

‘invulnerable aquaform’ was far superior than the techniques Ning had available to him. No matter how strong Ning was, he was only able to block a few of the warriors at once, whereas Ninedust’s invulnerable aquaform was able to have an impact on all of them.

“Kill!”

“Kill!” This was a site which the Sithe had used to train their Daolords; a mere ‘invulnerable aquaform’ wouldn’t be able to defeat it that easily. The warriors moved closer to each other and the golden light in their eyes shone even more brightly, causing golden light to spring up amongst them and cause them to join together into a whole. This caused the impact of the vast waves to be greatly lessened.

As for Ning, he remained the mainstay in this fight. He furiously and laboriously seeking out opportunities to smash one warrior after another off of the dimensional walkway, despite the formation the warriors were using.

“Eh?” After knocking yet another warrior off, both Ning and Ninedust noticed something behind them. Three more figures had suddenly appeared at the other end of the dimensional walkway.

The first figure was a red-robed youth who was carrying a bloodblade in his arms, surrounded by a towering, baleful aura. This was Daolord Dreamlore, a man who had been very low-key up until he had defeated the Radiant King in his first major battle.

The second man was a muscular man dressed in extremely thick gray armor whose eyes glowed with green light. This was the most powerful Daolord the Aberrants had, Daolord Tigrone. His divine body was so tough that not even King Gorsch had been able to injure him in the slightest. Daolord Tigrone had been the main reason why King Gorsch had died.

The last one was an insidious, scar-faced man who looked extremely mysterious. All Ning knew was that he was a Daolord of the Dark Kingdom known as Daolord Skyshatter. His real level of power was a mystery.

“Darknorth!”

The gazes of Daolord Dreamlord, Daolord Tigrone, and Daolord Skyshatter all fell upon Ning.

Chapter 7: Heartsword Art

“It’s them.” Ji Ning’s face tightened slightly.

“Darknorth, this will be troublesome. Daolord Dreamlore’s power is unfathomable, while Daolord Tigrone’s defenses are superior to any I’ve ever seen. As for Daolord Skyshatter, he’s a Daolord of the Dark Kingdom but was accepted by Daolord Dreamlore and Daolord Tigrone as a partner. He must be incredibly strong as well.” The Ninedust Sectlord frowned.

“Don’t worry about them. They were a full year behind us. It won’t be that easy for them to catch up to us,” Ning said. “Seize every moment and do your best to push as many of the warriors out of the dimensional walkway as you can.”

“Alright.” Ninedust nodded.

The two paid no more heed to the three Daolords behind them and began to focus on attacking the warriors up ahead.

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“The Voidsea Jadeseals are in the second world, while the command seals needed to harvest the fruit are in the third world.” Realmsoul Polo once more gave detailed instructions to the new arrivals. These supreme Daolords were amongst the most incredibly talented figures alive in the Endless Territories; it was important for him to give them good guidance. His master, Emperor Waveshift, was doing this for the sake of tempering these supreme Daolords and making them even better. The realmsoul naturally had to keep them fully informed.

“Got it.”

“Let’s move.”

Daolord Tigrone, Daolord Dreamlore, and Daolord Skyshatter began to advance as well, and they immediately began to suffer the attacks of the armored warriors in front of them.

“Hmph. Darknorth and Ninedust are fools. Why aren’t they using their secret arts or a heartworld projection? Are they trying to use this as a

training exercise?” Daolord Skyshatter frowned. Instantly, he sent a tri-colored surge of energy sweeping out to surround the area, wrapping itself around the warriors around him. However, the golden light covering the entire dimensional walkway immediately swirled forwards to cover it.

In raw power alone, Daolord Skyshatter’s secret arts were actually slightly stronger than even Ning’s nine novessence arts!

“What? My secret arts were nullified?” Daolord Skyshatter was shocked.

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Ning and Ninedust ignored the three behind them. They were very experienced in fighting against these warriors, and were able to work together perfectly. Ninedust was responsible for tying down and slowing the warriors, while Ning was responsible for delivering the final blow that knocked them off the walkway.

Time continued to flow on. Another year passed in the blink of an eye, with Ning’s team slowly advancing. The further they advanced, the more warriors assaulted them. Knocking the warriors off the dimensional walkway became increasingly difficult, as there was now a total of thirty-two warriors assaulting Ning’s team. This represented a force of thirty-two second-tier Daolords who were able to work together perfectly and who were invulnerable to all harm!

Just beating them wasn’t enough. You had to knock them off the dimensional walkway. It was simply too difficult! By now, Ning’s team needed to spend five or six days in battle before defeating a ‘wave’..

Whoosh! Ninedust transformed into a massive wave, but the upper half of his body was still visible. He continued to wield his longstaff, sending it smashing through the waves and knocking one enemy aside after another, doing his best to give Ning enough space to work in. As for Ning, he was even fiercer than he had been in the past, with each of his six Northbow swords containing astonishing amounts of power.

“Haha, Darknorth, these warriors are becoming increasingly difficult to defeat, but this process has been quite beneficial to my staff-arts. I’ve come up with a supreme technique of my own!” The Ninedust Sectlord let

out a loud laugh as he swept out with his longstaff. Whoosh! The water around him instantly formed into a whirlpool that was centered around his longstaff, causing layers of spatial illusions to appear around it.

Crimsonwave Temple placed extremely tight restrictions on spacetime techniques, but Ninedust was still able to cause spatial illusions to appear. In the outside world, the power of this strike would've been inconceivable!

BOOM! The staff smashed against an armored warrior, sending it flying away as if it was nothing more than a tiny little shrimp.

"Come up with a few more 'supreme techniques' like that," Ning said with a laugh. "Later on, you can let these other Daolords get a taste of them."

"Right. I'll make sure they know that I'm not easy to deal with." Ninedust had been intoxicated by this life of battle. These fights were helping him to discover many of his flaws and allowed him to perfect them. When he was able to reach a certain level of perfection, he was naturally able to come up with a new supreme technique.

"The other supreme Daolords have either fused two Supreme Daos or three Supreme Daos..." Ning mused silently to himself, "But they still have room for improvement. They can gain new insights and thus come up with more and better supreme techniques. I, however, have already reached the apex! It'll be very hard for me to improve in the near future."

"Mm. I suppose I should focus on the [Heartsword] for now." Ning was beginning to realize how hard it would be for him to upgrade his Omega Sword Dao any further. None of his five stances had been able to reach the fourth stage, and so he immediately chose to work on the [Heartsword] sword-art instead."

"The [Heartsword]..." A complete copy of the full [Heartsword] sutra appeared within Ning's mind. The golden-furred alien had given it to Ning's avatar during his visit to Vastheaven Palace, and Ning's avatar had immediately studied it.

The [Heartsword] art was an incredibly marvelous and miraculous sword-art! In importance, it actually succeeded the legacies of Hegemons!

Although it was ‘merely’ a sword-art, the Dao Alliance absolutely refused to transmit it to any other organizations. Even the Brightshore Kingdom was only able to procure the first ten stances after paying an utterly enormous price. If you wished to learn the full thing, you had to be a member of the Dao Alliance and pay an incredible price for it.

Ning’s performance in the Waveshift Realm had been simply dazzling. He had risen to prominence by slaughtering Sectlord Timedream and the Kingfreak, and his power was second only to Winesage! The Dao Alliance was naturally going to invest its resources in him. Given that they also had a favor to ask of Ning, they chose to just go ahead and gift the entire [Heartsword] to Ning! But of course, Ning was not permitted to transmit this to any others.

“How marvelous.” The more Ning learned regarding the [Heartsword] art, the more stunned he felt. The [Heartsword] art was a supreme sword-art that represented the perfect combination of Ki Refining principles, Fiendgod Refining principles, and Heartforce Cultivation principles.

Emperor Heartsword’s sword-arts, on a stand-alone basis, were merely on the same level as Emperor Mirrorsnow’s! However, this perfect combination of all three paths of cultivation made it so that his rather unremarkable sword-arts were able to unleash astonishing levels of power that surpassed even the likes of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities, putting him incredibly close to the Hegemon level! He was known as the Emperor who was closest to the Hegemons in power! How terrifying a concept was this?

“My current sword-arts have already transcended both space and time, putting me on par with Emperor Mirrorsnow’s level,” Ning mused. “If I can master the fifteenth stance of the [Heartsword], I’ll have eclipsed the eight lords of the Sacred Cities and be very close to the Hegemons as well.”

Moments later, Ning chuckled. That was nothing more than a fantasy. Ever since Emperor Heartsword had departed, there had never been a second cultivator capable of mastering the fifteenth stance of the [Heartsword]! This was because this sword-art was simply too arcane and

abstruse.

The first stance was known as the 'Heartsword' stance. The second stance, the 'Killsword' stance. The third stance, the 'Great Firmament' stance. The fourth stance, the 'Horizon's Edge' stance. The fifth stance, the 'Silent World' stance. The sixth stance, the 'Unicorn's Heart' stance. The seventh stance, the 'Cosmic Heart' stance.

The first six stances were at least understandable. Starting from the seventh stance, however, the technique became increasingly abstruse. Thankfully, Ning was incredibly talented in sword-arts and thus he mastered the seventh stance in the Sword Palace of the Brightshore Kingdom. It could be said that he had gained an elementary level of mastery in the [Heartsword].

However, this was still nothing more than an elementary level of mastery. The later stances were even more difficult to comprehend!

The eighth stance was named 'Ineffable'.

The ninth stance was named 'Blissheart'.

The tenth stance was named 'Killheart'.

The eleventh stance was named 'Teardrop'.

The twelfth stance was named 'Swordtide'.

The thirteenth stance was named 'Snowland Blood'.

The fourteenth stance was named 'Remorseless Unto Death'.

The fifteenth stance was named 'One Sword, One World'.

These stances were all incredibly abstruse, but they could be divided into several different tiers. The eighth stance to the tenth stance represented the first 'tier'! Most cultivators skilled in the [Heartsword] were stuck here in the first tier, unable to advance any further.

The eleventh and twelfth stances represented the second tier. Supposedly, cultivators who reached this level would see the power of the [Heartsword] technique skyrocket, but in every generation the number of cultivators who could reach this level could be counted on one hand.

The thirteenth and fourteenth stances represented the third tier. According to the records, only a single major power aside from Emperor Mirrorsnow had ever reached this level, but his name was a mystery! The records stated that at this level, one's level of power would skyrocket by such a level that using the [Heartsword] art provided an even greater boost in power than using a Universe treasure!

The fifteenth and final stance! Only Emperor Heartsword, the creator of this technique, had ever reached this level! By relying on this stance, he had been able to unleash quasi-Hegemon levels of power from his fairly mundane sword-arts.

"If I can even reach the third tier, I might be able to give Hegemons a good fight once I become a Daolord of the Fourth Step," Ning mused. This truly was an unearthly, incredible set of sword-arts, but it was also the hardest of all sword-arts to train in. The actual movements to each stance were not that important; what really mattered was the 'heart'.

"Time to begin."

Even the tallest of buildings have to start from the ground floor. Ning held all six Northbow swords as he fought, occasionally injecting some of the 'Cosmic Heart' elements into his stances. At other times, he'd attempt to replicate the eighth stance, 'Ineffable'. The [Heartsword] art focused on the heart, not on the actual stances, and so it was incredibly difficult to train in. Ning was incredibly talented in heartforce and had the largest heartworld of all the supreme Daolords in the Endless Territories, but he still found training in this technique to be extremely laborious. Despite that, he was still able to at least generate part of the 'feeling' of the eighth 'Ineffable' stance.

The 'Ineffable' stance couldn't be manufactured intentionally. One had to follow one's own heart and completely infuse it into one's sword-arts. Everything had to follow the natural flow... and when you were able to sense it, it would have been completed.

The eighth stance actually wasn't that bad. The later ones were even more abstruse and more difficult to study.

Chapter 8: Ineffable, Blissheart

“Ineffable.” When this sword-stance struck out, an invisible current of heartforce would naturally merge into it; there was no need to ‘force’ it or do it on purpose.

A layer of thin, invisible, mist-like heartforce appeared on the surface of the sword, causing the power of the attack to immediately increase and even speed up.

“What a strange feeling.” Ji Ning’s six Northbow swords howled forth, knocking down all of the warriors before him. Some were sent flying backwards, others were bowled over. “This is the first time I’ve felt something like this. When I use this sword-art, I feel as though I’ve transformed into a sword. What a wonderful, enjoyable feeling. I feel as though the power of my sword-arts has risen by 20%.”

Mastering the seventh stance, ‘Cosmic Heart’, merely represented gaining a basic grasp of the [Heartsword]; it was of negligible benefit to him. The eighth stance, ‘Ineffable’, already allowed him to increase the power of his sword-arts by 20%! It must be remembered that Ning trained in the Omega Sword Dao; improving upon the power of his sword-arts was extremely difficult.

“Darknorth, you found a way to enhance the strength of your swords?” Ninedust had been working alongside Ning, and he immediately sensed Ning’s transformation.

“Haha, you’ve found ways to improve yourself. Why can’t I?” Ning was in a delightful mood. After just five years of researching the [Heartsword] art, he had become proficient in the eighth stance. This was actually much faster than he had predicted. According to the records he had reviewed, the [Heartsword] was supposed to be extremely difficult to train in.

Ning had forgotten, however, that his sword-arts were derived from the third-stage Omega Sword Dao, while his heartforce made him the strongest Heartforce Cultivator in all the Endless Territories.

“After entering Crimsonwave Temple, I’ve developed two consummate

techniques,” Ninedust said smugly. “I’ve grown much more than you have.”

“You won’t be smug for much longer.” Ning began to work on the ninth stance, the ‘Blissheart’ stance.

“This feeling truly is absolutely marvelous.” Ning actually closed his eyes as he continued to execute his sword-arts, but he maintained in complete control of himself and his surroundings. “I understand. This sword-art really can throw the wielder into a state of utter contentment and bliss.”

He immersed himself in this feeling. Just six short months later...

“Blissheart.” Ning’s sword-light transformed once more. In the past, every strike had been covered with a mist-like layer of heartforce. Now, the mist was clearly much denser than before, and with each strike it was like a fog drifted in alongside it.

Whooooosh. No sword-shadows could be seen around Ning; the only thing visible was a series of mist-streaks.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Ning’s power increased dramatically, allowing him to blow through the warriors like rotted wood. The warriors, however, gathered themselves and continued their furious attacks.

“Darknorth, y-you... you grew stronger yet again?” Ninedust was flabbergasted.

“Haha...” Ning laughed loudly. “I told you a while ago that you won’t be smug for much longer. Now do you know how badass I am?” He had mastered the ‘Blissheart’ stance, and his sword-arts increased 50% in power!

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“What’s going on?”

“Impossible.”

“How can they be advancing this quickly?”

Daolord Tigrone, Daolord Dreamlore, and Daolord Skyshatter were in the same dimensional walkway, and they were also fighting the endless

hordes of warriors. They were stunned by what they saw. Given that the three of them were working together, they technically should've held the upper hand over Ning and Ninedust! A while ago, they had been slowly but steadily narrowing the gap between them and Ning's team. Their initial calculations had indicated that they would be able to catch up in five or six years.

Ning's mastery of the 'Ineffable' stance didn't have too much of an impact on their calculations... but now that Ning had mastered the ninth stance, 'Blissheart', the difference was apparent!

"Daolord Darknorth is already incredibly strong. How could he have grown even stronger?" Daolord Skyshatter frowned.

"Daolord Darknorth has been training for less than a full chaos cycle, but he's already become a supreme Daolord." Daolord Dreamlore said coldly, "He naturally has plenty of room to improve. I imagine he's come up with a new supreme technique for himself."

The Radiant King, Palace Lord Dawnstar, and the others had all slowly developed their supreme techniques after becoming Daolords of the Fourth Step. The same was currently true of Ninedust as well. As Dreamlore saw it, Ning was most likely searching for the ultimate attack which would fit himself the most.

"Daolord Darknorth truly is difficult to deal with," Daolord Tigrone growled. "To beat the two of them and seize the Voidsea Jadeseal won't be easy."

"There's only two of them but three of us," Daolord Dreamlore said coldly. "We aren't idiots like Kingfreak and Timedream."

"Right. When we work together, only Winesage is a threat to us." Daolord Skyshatter felt quite confident as well.

Tigrone felt certain he possessed the strongest defensive abilities of all the supreme Daolords.

Dreamlore felt certain he possessed the strongest attacks of all the supreme Daolords; he had actually beaten the Radiant King in a head-on

fight!

Daolord Skyshatter was equal to the other two in might.

The deceased Timedream and Kingfreak were ranked well below the top ten in close combat power, while Timedream's heartforce techniques were useless against Ning. The Tigrone-Skyshatter-Dreamlore alliance was completely different! The only one they worried about was Winesage; they didn't care about any other Daolords at all!

"Winesage has a Universe treasure, but I have to admit that Darknorth is a truly dazzling figure," Daolord Dreamlore said coldly. "We have to fight with all our power. Otherwise, we'll probably be defeated by the two of them."

"Right." Tigrone and Skyshatter both nodded. Upon seeing how quickly Ning's team was advancing, not even Dreamlore dared to underestimate them.

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The dimensional walkway of the first world. Ning's group was currently battling against a final group of warriors. This time, there were thirty-nine warriors surrounding and attacking them. This meant they had to deal with thirty-nine second-tier Daolords at the same time!

If Ning was fighting by himself, he would've been beaten long ago.

Rumble... Ninedust transformed into a vast wave that swept across all thirty-nine warriors, his upper body still visible and wielding that longstaff as he furiously assaulted those around him. The warriors, however, were assembled into a war-formation and were valiantly charging towards the two.

"Break!" Ning was fighting the armored warriors head-on. Streaks of mist flew out with his swords, and the warriors were knocked aside each time the mist connected with them. Even the slightest scrape would cause them to be sent flying backwards. Unfortunately, there were still thirty-nine of them; when some were pushed back, others would immediately charge forwards and take up their positions, allowing the ones who had

been pushed back to regroup and then charge as well.

They had to find a chance to create an opening!

Ning and Ninedust had to battle furiously for more than a month before they were finally able to knock the thirty-nine warriors out of the dimensional walkway.

“Aaaaaaaah.” Ninedust stared at the black throne, then lifted his head up and let loose a loud howl. “We finally beat’ m!”

“Whew.” Ning smiled as well, but he felt a bit of regret in his heart. He had spent nearly ten years battling within the first world, but he still had yet to master the tenth stance of the [Heartsword], the ‘Killheart’ stance.

“Keep having fun back there, the three of you.” Ninedust turned back to glance at Daolord Skyshatter, Daolord Dreamlore, and Daolord Tigrone. The three of them were surrounded by thirty-six armored warriors.

“Damn.”

“They’ve made it to the second world.”

“These warriors are too tough to deal with, and any Dao-seals we use are actually cancelled out.” Daolord Skyshatter and the other two were starting to grow anxious. They went so far as to use Dao-seals, but the dazzling golden light radiated by the golden globe above them quickly suppressed and wiped out all the effects of the Dao-seals they used. The Sithe used this place to temper their Daolords; no cheating would be permitted here.

Ning gave the three a long, final glance. If he hadn’t been able to master the ninth stance, ‘Blissheart’, it probably would’ve taken him another ten years to traverse the dimensional walkway. The three probably would’ve caught up to him.

“Those three cannot be underestimated,” Ning mused.

“Let’s go, Darknorth,” Ninedust said.

“Let’s go.” Ning nodded.

Ning and Ninedust both walked straight towards the black throne.

Instantly, the golden globe above them shot down a streak of dense light which covered the black throne and an area of thirty meters around it. Boom! Both the sword-wielding, white-robed Ning and the staff-wielding, silver-robed Ninedust disappeared without a trace.

“Faster, faster, faster! Fight harder! We need to make it to the second world as soon as we can!” Daolord Skyshatter and the other two were going crazy.

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The world twisted and changed around them before reality reset itself around Ning and Ninedust.

“Eh?” Ning glanced at what was up ahead. In front of them was an enormous palace that was held up by a series of black pillars. The pillars were covered by many carvings and diagrams, including sword-arts diagrams, saber-arts diagrams, flame diagrams, wave diagrams, golden light diagrams, flaming chariot diagrams, animal diagrams... all sorts of diagrams were here, and they all emanated auras of mystery and power.

“Hmph.” Six golden-armored warriors were standing in front of them, with three more crimson-armored warriors standing shoulder-to-shoulder off in the distance. Very far away, a black-armored general was seated on a distant throne. The general was playing around with a palm-sized chunk of jade.

“The Voidsea Jadeseal.” Ning and Ninedust both stared at the palm-sized chunk of jade in the hands of the black-armored general who was seated on the distant throne. They had both seen a Voidsea Jadeseal before and thus recognized it right away.

“Daolord Darknorth. Daolord Ninedust.” Rainbow light gathered next to them, coalescing into a white-robed figure. It was Realmsoul Polo. The realmsoul smiled and said, “Congratulations on making it to the second world... but you two need to hurry it up. Winesage was able to make it to the second world after just a single year in the first world.”

Chapter 9: The Second World

“Just one year?” Ji Ning’s heart sank. After he had mastered the ninth ‘Blissheart’ stance, he and Ninedust had taken nearly ten additional years.

“Thus, your opponents shall not merely consist of Daolords behind you like Dreamlore. Winesage shall be your opponent as well. Once he acquires the first Voidsea Jadeseal, he’ll definitely come for yours.” Realmsoul Polo pointed in front of them. “This palace holds a total of 134 pillars, with each pillar containing multiple formations left behind by the Sithe race. If you have enough time, you can go study them.”

Ning and Ninedust glanced sideways at the realmsoul. Study? They were fighting for every scrap of time. Who had the time to waste on studying? In addition, the majority of supreme Daolords merely dabbled in non-core techniques.

“In this palace, you’ll need to defeat the six golden-armored warriors, the three crimson-armored warriors, and then finally defeat the black-armored general. Only then shall you be able to seize the Voidsea Jadeseal.” The realmsoul smiled. “Oh, right. The runic cores at the center of their chests are their weak spots. If you can stab it, they’ll admit defeat.”

“Move as fast as you can. If you move fast enough, you might even be able to seize the other Voidsea Jadeseals... and if you are too slow, you’ll lose even yours.” The realmsoul grinned, then vanished.

“Let’s go.” Ning and Ninedust transformed into two streaks of light that charged straight forwards.

“Just two Daolords? And you dare attack?” The six golden-armored warriors standing next to each other shared a smile, then began to move in unison. Whoosh! Each of them brandished a long golden halberd as they strode forwards.

Ninedust wielded his longstaff and charged straight towards them. As he reached them, he instantly transformed into an enormous flood of water.

Ning transformed into his three-headed, six-armed form as he shot

forward with all six Northbow swords, then suddenly vanished.

Whoosh! The halberds in the hands of the six golden-armored warriors struck out simultaneously. Smash! Smash! Smash! The waters in front of them exploded as an invisible burst of power spread out in every direction, causing Ning to reveal himself after having used his 'Shadowless' evasion art.

"Fuck off!" Ning flew forwards with incomparable valor, immediately using his Omega Sword Dao – Heavenbreaker and sending six massive fog banks crashing down. Boom! Boom! Boom! The strikes landed on the halberds of the six golden-armored warriors, causing all of them to stagger backwards from the strikes.

"He's very strong."

"He's able to suppress us by himself?" The six golden-armored warriors shared a glance.

"Careful," Ning sent mentally to the Ninedust Sectlord. "All six of them are at the supreme Daolord level of power."

"Six supreme Daolords. Interesting." The Ninedust Sectlord charged once more, carrying the vast ocean with him. As for Ning, his actions were even more dominating; his sword-light transformed into streaks of dense fog and lashed out at his foes. It must be remembered that the Northbow swords enhanced all of Ning's sword-arts. Now that he also had the [Heartsword] sutra enhancing them, his combat power was truly astonishing.

Ninedust was able to tie down two of the golden-armored warriors, while Ning battled the other four by himself.

Swish! Every so often he would suddenly disappear, followed by that strange, fog-like sword-light emerging out of nowhere. This was the Omega Sword Dao – Shadowless. A sword stabbed straight into the dazzling runic core located over the golden-armored warrior's chest!

"Eh?" The golden-armored warrior's face tightened. He lowered his head to take a look, then let out a snort. "Nice sword-arts." He immediately

stepped back.

When the six of them worked together, they complimented each other very well and made for a formidable team. Ning's sword-arts, however, moved more than a hundred times the speed of light and was unfathomably unpredictable, making it difficult for even their tough defenses to withstand it.

"Hahaha..." Ninedust laughed loudly. "Darknorth, let's move fast. We need to get that first Voidsea Jadeseal quickly, so that we can go for a second one."

Ning smiled as well. Now that one warrior was down, beating the others would be much easier. They quickly defeated the other five in succession. All six of the warriors retreated, moving to one side.

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There were six golden-armored warriors, three crimson-armored warriors, and one black-armored general. With the golden-armored warriors defeated, it was the three crimson-armored warriors who now stood in Ning and Ninedust's path.

"You two are pretty strong. You were able to beat those six idiots fairly easily," one of the tall, crimson-armored warriors snickered.

"You are the idiot!"

"If you try to fight us six-on one, we'd beat you until you went crying to your mother." The six distant golden-armored warriors immediately began to unleash a torrent of curses, while the three crimson-armored warriors just smirked at them.

"You've already been beaten. Stop bragging."

"Looks like it'll be up to us brothers. Hah!" The three crimson-armored warriors seemed quite smug as they looked at Ning and Ninedust. "Let me tell you a little story. In the other area, that 'Daolord Winesage' was able to beat the six golden-armored warriors in one strike, but he was stymied by the three crimson-armored warriors for six full years. Right now, he's still trying to figure out how to deal with the black-armored general."

“Oh?” Ning and Ninedust traded a glance. They knew just how strong Winesage was. Given his Universe treasure, there was no question that he could crush the six golden-armored warriors effortlessly. Despite that, the three crimson-armored warriors had held him back for six years?

“Let’s go,” Ning ordered. Whoosh! Whoosh! Both he and Ninedust charged forwards.

Boom! With the very first strike, a crimson-armored warrior landed a cleaving blow with his warblade, causing Ninedust’s body to crumble apart into a wave of water. “Darknorth, I can’t block these hits. They are too strong.”

Bang! Ning started fighting against a crimson-armored warrior as well. That particular warrior wielded a war club, and he delivered a furious blow downwards at Ning, almost as though he was crashing down from a mountain. The two collided head-on, and an incredibly dense wave of energy smashed into Ning, causing him to stumble three steps back. As for the crimson-armored warrior, he took a single step back.

“Eh?” Ning’s face tightened. “He’s just as strong as me?” He had grown significantly more powerful, but even now he was merely on par with the crimson-armored warrior. If the three joined forces... no wonder Winesage had been stymied for six full years!

“Daolord Darknorth has a few tricks up his sleeve. Big brother, third brother, let’s fight together!” the crimson-armored warrior shouted, and the other two immediately charged towards him.

Rumble... all three of the three crimson-armored warriors were Ning’s equal in might, and they were extremely skilled in working together. Ning was being completely suppressed in this battle. Although Ninedust was able to occasionally cause some trouble and disrupt the enemy formation, he wasn’t able to have a material impact on the fight.

“Darknorth, their teamwork is flawless. There’s no way for us to stab the runic cores on their chests,” Ninedust said anxiously.

“They are too strong. When the three of them work together, there’s nothing I can do to them.” Ning frowned. “The only way we can win is

through greater numbers. If more Daolords come and work with us, we might be able to find a chance to strike the runic cores.”

They needed either superior numbers or overwhelming power like Winesage.

“Perhaps I’ll have a chance to master the tenth stance, the ‘Killheart’ stance.” Ning was surrounded and attacked by all three of the crimson-armored warriors, but his defensive sword-arts were very strong and thus he was still able to hold on. He began to take advantage of this enormous pressure to think on the tenth stance of the [Heartsword], the ‘Killheart’ stance.

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Time continued to flow on, with a half-year passing by in the blink of an eye. Ning and Ninedust remained locked in combat against the three crimson-armored warriors, but of course they continued to be at a disadvantage in the fight. In short, they were being completely dominated.

Boom!

Suddenly, a thunderous explosion caused the entire Crimsonwave Temple to shake. Everyone in the temple heard and felt it, be it the Daolords battling in the second world such as Ning, Ninedust, Dawnstar, Cloudwalker, Ninestone, Shaka, and Snowjoy, or the Daolords still stuck in the first world such as Daolords Dreamlore, Tigrone, the Starking, the Radiant King, Skyaxe, Dustrain.

“Daolords.” Realmsoul Polo’s voice boomed out, filling every inch of the Crimsonwave Temple. “Winesage has already acquired one of the three remaining Voidsea Jadeseals. Be careful – he’ll be coming for yours next!”

“What?”

“Shit!”

The faces of Dawnstar, Cloudwalker, Ninestone, Shaka, and Snowjoy all turned pale. The path Cloudwalker’s team had chosen was the path which Dawnstar had originally taken! The four of them joined forces upon entering the first world and thus moved even faster than Ning’s group

had. This was the advantage of raw numbers! The fact that Ninestone and Snowjoy were exceedingly strong defensive specialists made them very well-suited for dealing with the first world.

“We need to move faster.”

“Not good.”

“We need to speed it up.”

“Everyone, let’s work together.” The supreme Daolords who were still within the three dimensional walkways of the first world were beginning to grow anxious. They were still in the first world while Winesage had already acquired a Voidsea Jadeseal!

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Ning and Ninedust felt their hearts turn cold as well. They hadn’t even beaten the three crimson-armored guards, while Winesage had already acquired a seal?

“He might be headed straight here for yours,” the three crimson-armored guards teased in amusement.

“Don’t be worried though. If Winesage comes we’ll attack him as well, and the two of you can focus your attacks against him. The two of you plus the three of us... that should shut him down, right?” the three crimson-armored guards suggested. They had spent unfathomable lengths of time being bored and lonely here in Crimsonwave Temple. The happiest days of their lives were when supreme Daolords came to visit.

Chapter 10: Killsword

“Darknorth, what should we do?” Ninedust was anxious as well.

“Seize every moment and try to beat these three crimson-armored warriors as soon as we can,” Ji Ning said immediately. “Winesage’s actions have probably driven all of the supreme Daolords into a panic. Seven, eight, or even more of them might well work together to blow through the first world as soon as possible. Once they reach the second world, we probably won’t be able to deal with these three in peace.”

“Alright.” Ninedust agreed with this assessment.

In the Endless Territories’ rankings of Daolords, there were over twenty publicly acclaimed ‘supreme’ first-tier Daolords! If you factored in the low-key ones that very few had heard of, there had to be at least thirty or more.

Although the warriors in the dimensional walkway of the first world were tough to deal with, they were still just equivalent to second-tier Daolords. If seven or eight supreme Daolords joined forces against them, they’d be able to burst past with ease.

“We don’t have much time left,” Ning said anxiously.

“Kill!” Both Ning and Ninedust fought even more frantically.

“Haha, the two of you aren’t bad, but you aren’t strong enough to beat us.”

“It is useless! You should wait for the other Daolords to arrive, then join up with them.” The three crimson-armored warriors continued to crush the Ning-Ninedust combination.

“Kill! Kill! Kill!” Ning only grew more and more frantic. He knew that they were running out of time; his only chance lay in mastering the tenth stance of the [Heartsword], the ‘Killsword’ stance. He had already spent many years studying it again and again, but hadn’t been able to master it thus far.

“Haha... Winesage has gone to Palace Lord Dawnstar’s dimensional walkway. However, five supreme Daolords including Dawnstar have joined

forces against him. My guess is that Winesage is going to give up. He'll be coming straight for your walkway instead," the three crimson-armored warriors said.

"Palace Lord Dawnstar's tunnel has five supreme Daolords in it, but the two of you are by yourselves. It'll be quite tough for you to deal with Winesage. He might actually take the Voidsea Jade seal away from you."

The crimson-armored warriors clearly knew exactly what was going on elsewhere as well.

"Are we out of time?" Ninedust grew increasingly anxious.

"Break!" Ning's streaks of foggy sword-light suddenly transformed. The foggy mist suddenly condensed and solidified into clear streaks of sword-light, and the power of Ning's sword-arts once more skyrocketed! They became even faster and were filled with even greater power!

"So this is the 'Killsword' stance?" Ning finally understood the essence of the tenth stance of the [Heartsword] – the Killsword stance.

It required one to not only feel intoxicated and blissful, but to also feel a sense of incomparable resolve and determination! Only when this determination and resolve reached a certain level of strength could heartforce be woven more perfectly into one's sword-arts. One's heartforce would move in a more natural way and achieve a greater level of harmony, allowing the power of one's sword-arts to increase. This was reflected in the real world by the dense fog solidifying into the shape of a sword!

Slash! Slash! Ning executed the Blood Drop stance. The Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop! This was Ning's most powerful attack, as the Northbow swords increased its power fivefold! Now that even more heartforce was infused into it via the 'Killsword' stance, its power doubled yet again!

The ninth stance, 'Blissheart', increased his power by 50%.

The tenth stance, 'Killheart', increased his power by 100%!

Thanks to his [Heartsword] and the Northbow swords, Ning's Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop was now ten times more powerful than it had

any right to be! It was a technique that focused on obliterating everything in its path with unstoppable speed, and now it had sped up even more and reached an incomprehensible level of might.

Clang!

Slash!

The crimson-armored warrior used his warblade to execute the same stance as he had in the past to block Ning's sword-arts, but his face suddenly turned pale. He was able to just barely block two strikes from Ning, but he wasn't able to withstand the third strike. Slash! The tip of the sword stabbed straight into the runic core at the center of his chest.

"I lost?!" The crimson-armored warrior was stunned.

"Big brother!" The other two crimson-armored warriors were stunned as well. Even when the three of them were fighting together, their big brother had been stabbed in his runic core? How were the two of them supposed to hang on?

"How could this have happened?"

"Impossible."

The two remaining crimson-armored warriors continued to struggle, unwilling to give up.

"Excellent!" The Ninedust Sectlord was delighted and surprised by this. Moments ago, he had been at the brink of despair. Now, he felt as though he had been given a new lease on life. A short while later, the runic core on the chest of a second crimson-armored warrior was pierced through. A heartbeat later, the final crimson-armored warrior was defeated as well.

"Too fast. His sword is too fast!"

"Winesage is overwhelmingly strong, but at least we could take his attacks head-on. Darknorth's sword is simply too fast, so fast that we can't even defend against it." The three crimson-armored warriors were thoroughly convinced by their defeat.

Overwhelming strength or overwhelming speed... which was better?

These represented two extremes. If your power reached certain heights, you could brute-force through anything you wished and nothing could stop you. However, if your speed reached certain heights, your enemy wouldn't even be able to touch you while you would be able to launch attacks with ease.

Winesage relied on his Universe treasure to reach incredible heights of power, allowing him to actually send the crimson-armored warriors flying with each blow. However, their defensive teamwork was so tight and perfect that even when sent flying they could avoid giving Winesage the chance to stab their runic cores. This was why Winesage had been stymied for six full years by the three crimson-armored warriors.

As for Ning? When he had battled against Daolord Shaka, his attack speed had already surpassed Shaka's. Now that he had mastered the 'Killsword' stance, his speed once more broke through its previous bottleneck to reach a brand new level!

He was simply too fast, making defending against him an incredibly difficult task. As a result, the three crimson-armored warriors were all consecutively defeated in short order.

"You won." The three crimson-armored warriors all retreated.

"Impressive, Darknorth. Impressive! Your sword is simply too fast, far faster than Daolord Shaka's. My guess is that not even the Radiant King is necessarily a match for you in speed. Your attack speed might be the fastest amongst all Daolords," Ninedust said excitedly.

"To be faster than the Radiant King isn't all that impressive! Only when I'm faster than Daolord Dreamlore would I be the fastest of all Daolords," Ning said. Daolord Dreamlore's usage of the bloodblade had surpassed the Radiant King in attack speed, allowing him to gain victory.

"Let's hurry up and defeat the final black-armored general." Ning didn't have any time to waste, and he immediately charged towards the seated black-armored general.

"Right." Ninedust hefted his longstaff and charged towards the final challenge as well.

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Within another hall within the temple.

Palace Lord Dawnstar, Palace Lord Cloudwalker, Ninestone, Snowjoy, and Shaka were here. They had joined forces and had already fought their way to the black-armored general, but the general was simply too fearsome.

“Haha, this black-armored general is roughly on par with the eight lords of the Sacred Cities. Even if the five of you work together, it’ll be virtually impossible for you to stab his runic core,” Winesage said with a laugh.

“Winesage, one Voidsea Jadeseal is enough; don’t get too greedy!” Dawnstar and the others were working together, assisting the three crimson-armored warriors and preventing Winesage from advancing. All newcomers would be assaulted by all of the warriors upon reaching the second world.

“Winesage, you have no chance at all.” The combined forces of Dawnstar, Ninestone, Shaka, Cloudwalker, and Snowjoy brought Winesage a tremendous amount of pressure. Given the situation, there was no way he could defeat the three crimson-armored warriors at all.

“Hmph.” After battling for a short while, Winesage realized that he really had no chance at all. He let out a calm laugh and said, “The black-armored general is far too strong. You’ll need to find more helpers to work with you. As a group, you have to exceed the level of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities in at least one area, be it speed or power or something else, if you wish to have a chance at succeeding.”

In raw power, Winesage was still somewhat weaker than the eight lords of the Sacred Cities, but the Universe treasure brought him up to par. As a result, he was able to battle the black-armored general for a long period of time while seeking out a mistake or error. All he had to do was touch the runic core across the black-armored general’s chest and he was able to claim victory.

There was a big difference between just touching the chest and actually winning, after all!

For example, Ning and Ninedust stood no chance of truly defeating those three crimson-armored warriors. But merely touching the runic cores? Ning, via the speed of his Blood Drop stance, was able to succeed in this mission.

“Haha. I won’t play around with you any longer. I’m going to go see how Darknorth is doing.” Winesage let out a laugh, then gracefully retreated and moved towards the other region at high speed.

In the second world, the three major regions were all interlinked.

“Whew!” Dawnstar, Cloudwalker, and the others all let out sighs of relief.

“Winesage is heading towards Darknorth,” Ninestone said.

“Darknorth’s going to be in trouble, but we don’t have any time to spare with helping him,” Dawnstar said. “We need to try to seize every moment and try to find a chance to strike the black-armored general on the chest. As long as we can touch that runic core, we’ll have won.”

“Agreed.” They all understood that more and more supreme Daolords would begin to arrive, which meant that their chances would grow increasingly slim.

Chapter 11: Winesage Arrives

Ji Ning and Ninedust jointly charged towards the black-armored general.

The black-armored general seated on the throne was toying with the Voidsea Jadeseal with one hand, seeming quite relaxed. He put the seal down next to him on the throne, then rose to his feet.

“Aside from Dao-seals and similar treasures, you are permitted to use any secret arts or domain-type effects,” the black-armored warrior said calmly.

“Oh?” Ning and Ninedust were both stunned. Secret arts and heartworld projections were both permissible? In their previous battles, all such techniques had been suppressed! Ning had actually tried to use his heartworld projection and secret arts against the golden-armored warriors and the crimson-armored warriors, but alas the effects had been neutralized.

As for Dao-seals, of course those would always be forbidden. This place was created by the Sithe to train and temper their Daolords; using Dao-seals would completely and truly make the entire exercise pointless.

“Nine novessence arts and heartworld projection, descend!” Ning didn’t hesitate at all in executing these two techniques, causing an awe-inspiring Yin-Yang Sword Domain to descend along with the manifestation of his heartworld projection. Both came crashing straight down against the black-armored general.

The black-armored general gripped the warblade by his side. “Your heartworld projection and your secret arts aren’t bad.” The black-armored general suddenly manifested a total of three layers of black light over his body. The black light completely covered and protected him from the might of the nine novessence arts and the heartworld projection. “Unfortunately, they aren’t quite enough to do anything to me.” He instantly drew his warblade.

Whoosh! A streak of dazzling black saber-light instantly sliced across the skies and chopped towards Ning. It was simply too fast; as soon as the

saber was drawn, the saber-light had reached Ning! When Ning saw that terrifying saber-light appear before him, he felt his heart tremble.

“He’s at the level of the eight lords of the Sacred Cities.” When Ning saw the saber-light, he instantly understood how strong the black-armored general was. The streak of saber-light vastly surpassed a hundred times the speed of light, and in power it was just as strong as a strike from Winesage. It completely surpassed the level which supreme Daolords were capable of reaching.

Swish! Ning suddenly vanished without a trace. Slash! The saber-light sliced through the position Ning had previously been in, carving a deep gouge within the field of sword-intent generated by the Yin-Yang Sword domain. Moments later, the gouge quickly disappeared but Ning was nowhere to be found.

Of Ning’s five Omega Sword Dao stances, two were defensive while the other three (Heavenbreaker, Shadowless, Blood Drop) had various special effects.

The Shadowless stance allowed him to turn completely invisible and evade even godsense.

The Blood Drop stance, when used with the Northbow swords, was Ning’s most powerful attack.

Although his heartworld projection and the nine novessence arts were unable to harm his opponent, they at least rendered him unable to defeat Ning’s Shadowless stance.

“Eh? Where’s he hiding?” The black-armored general frowned as he immediately swept out with his warblade, launching an omnidirectional attack.

“Hahaha! You won’t be able to find him.” Ninedust laughed loudly as he transformed into an awesome wave that furiously surged out towards the black-armored general and coiled around him.

The black-armored general’s saber-light was impeded by Ninedust’s waves and also slowed down by Ning’s heartworld and the nine

novessence arts. With Ning already knowing where the saber-light would land, he was naturally able to avoid it with ease.

Slash! A mist-formed sword suddenly struck out from nowhere and stabbed against the outermost layer of black light covering the black-armored general. Slash! All three layers were pierced through, but the speed of the sword was lessened as well.

When Ning struck, his strike would appear in front of you instantaneously!

“Eh?” The black-armored general’s face tightened as he immediately struck out with his own warblade to block Ning’s strike. His defensive saber-arts were quite flawless, allowing him to block Ning’s strike almost instantly.

Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash!

As the black-armored general’s warblade clashed against Ning’s Northbow sword, the other five Northbow swords suddenly appeared as well, having transformed into five streaks of sword-shaped fog that stabbed straight through the three layers of black light.

“What?!” Because his warblade had just clashed against Ning’s first Northbow sword, the black-armored general’s reaction speed was just a little too slow... and Ning’s other five Northbow swords were just too fast.

Whoosh! The black-armored general’s warblade sliced out a beautiful arc in the air. As the defender he always held a certain advantage, because he only had to defend a fairly small area, allowing him to deflect many attacks from the enemy with ease. However... his warblade had been weakened and slowed down by its impact against Ning’s Northbow sword! This had an impact on his defensive stance.

Slash! One of the streaks of sword-shaped fog stabbed straight into the black-armored general’s runic core.

“What?” The black-armored general was stunned. He just stood there blankly. “I lost? I lost that fast?” He had lost so quickly that he couldn’t even believe it.

“B-but...” The six golden-armored warriors and the three crimson-armored warriors who had retreated early on all stared dumbly. The black-armored general was on par with the eight lords of the Sacred Cities! But of course, he had certain flaws compared to the actual lords... with the main flaw being that he only had a single weapon! Most true Emperors would manifest at least six arms to fight against foes, whereas the black-armored general would only use a single warblade against his foes as this was what had been designated by the Sithe.

The difference in power was too great, after all. Generally speaking, supreme Daolords would be crushed by the black-armored general. Many ‘ordinary’ supreme Daolords found it impossible to even penetrate the three layers of black light!

The Shadowless stance made it impossible to predict where the attack would come from. As soon as Ning attacked, his swords would have already gone through the three layers of black light, making it difficult for the general to defend.

The worst part was, Ning’s sword was incredibly fast. All six of them were incredibly fast, and they were also extremely unpredictable! Given that the black-armored general only had a single warblade to deal with the six Northbow swords, and given that the Shadowless stance allowed Ning to close in on him unhindered... alas, he was defeated at the first go.

“I can send you flying with a single blow from my saber.” The black-armored general shook his head in disbelief.

“But your saber-light wasn’t able to touch me, not even once.” Ning shook his head as well. In the end, the black-armored general wasn’t a true Eternal Emperor; he didn’t even have domain-type secret arts. Winedust, for example, was able to use both a heartworld projection and secret arts to prevent Ning from moving too close to him via the Shadowless stance; if Ning attempted to do so, he would be exposed by the domain.

“I’m able to silently approach you without giving you any hint as to where I am! Given how fast my six Northbow swords are... if I’m still

unable to touch your runic core despite all these advantages then that would mean I'm ridiculously weaker than the eight lords of the Sacred Cities." Ning was in quite a good mood, both at how strong he had become as well as at his final success.

"The Voidsea Jadeseal..." Ninedust stared at the jade seal atop the throne, his eyes gleaming with excitement. This was a legendary treasure, the most powerful Daomerge treasure available. It had drawn the attention of virtually all of the supreme Daolords of the Endless Territories. Today, it would become his?

"What are you looking at? Go take it!" Ning barked.

"T-then I'll really go grab it...?" Ninedust felt rather embarrassed, as Ning was primarily responsible for their success. But in truth, he had played a major role as well. His invulnerable aquaform was very tough for foes to deal with, and the way in which he had transformed into waves that hindered their foes made things much easier for Ning. Otherwise, Ning by himself would've taken forever to overcome even the first world.

"We agreed early on that it'd be yours. Stop wasting time! If you delay any longer, I'm gonna fight you for it," Ning said.

Swoosh! Seemingly panicked, Ninedust reached out with his right hand, moving lightning-fast as he grabbed the jade seal atop the throne.

"Ninedust, you..." Ning stared at him. "Was it really necessary to grab it that fast? You moved more than a hundred times the speed of light!"

"Yeah, just keep laughing. I really don't care right now. Ahaha!" Ninedust was in quite a good mood. Even if Ning was to stab him with a hundred knives, he'd still continue to chortle.

Ning smiled as well. He had felt quite guilty towards Ninedust this entire time, but now he felt much better.

Whoosh. A streak of light appeared off in the distance, then flew straight towards them. It was Winesage.

"Fellow Daoists." A sonorous voice boomed out, echoing throughout every inch of the Crimsonwave Temple. "The second of the three final

Voidsea Jadeseals has been acquired by Daolord Ninedust!”

Winesage trembled slightly, looking almost like a bloodlusted mortal who suddenly had a bucket of icewater poured over him. He landed on the ground, staring dazedly at Ning and Ninedust and the throne next to them.

“You...” Winesage couldn’t believe it. This was simply too fast! He had just acquired his a short while. Somehow, Ning and Ninedust had successfully acquired one as well?

“Haha, it’s on me. Come and take it, if you can.” Ninedust was quite smug. Given his invulnerable aquaform, he really didn’t fear any Daolords at all.

Ning stood by Ninedust’s side, a smile on his face as he looked at Winesage. “Winesage. You arrived too late.”

Chapter 12: The Third World

Winesage narrowed his eyes, then let out a smile. “Darknorth, I truly admire you. Without a Universe treasure and with just brother Ninedust assisting you, you were able to defeat all of these warriors... and then you gave the Voidsea Jadeseal to Ninedust!”

The way in which Winesage viewed Ning had changed. During the last competition, the jade seal had ended up in Daolord Solesky’s hands. This time, Ning had been the main contributory to their victory against the black-armored general, but he had ended up giving the Voidsea Jadeseal to Ninedust! Winesage knew that if Darknorth was able to act in such a way despite the allure of the Voidsea Jadeseal, he would definitely be a friend worth making.

“You were literally just a few seconds too late. Otherwise, Ninedust and I would’ve been in serious trouble,” Ning said.

“Palace Lord Dawnstar and the others haven’t taken away their Voidsea Jadeseal yet. Why don’t we join forces to take it from them? Neither of us have any chance if we go by ourselves, but our chances are significant if we join forces. The fastest one shall be the one to win the Voidsea Jadeseal,” Winesage said.

Dawnstar and the other four alone were enough to tie down Winesage! Once you added the three crimson-armored warriors and the black-armored general into the mix, it would be no easy feat at all. Even if he and Ning joined forces, they only stood a chance and were not assured of victory. The main reason why Winesage wanted to try working together with Ning was because he had decided that Ning was a friend worth making.

“No need.” Ning shook his head.

“You aren’t going to take part?” Winesage was surprised.

“Not taking part,” Ning said.

“Once someone ends up with the Voidsea Jadeseal, it’ll be a hundred

times more difficult to pry it out of their hands,” Winesage said. Of all the Daolords present, the only one he cared about was Ji Ning.

“No need to try and persuade me. I’ve already made up my mind,” Ning said.

“Then I won’t force things.” Winesage transformed into a streak of light and flew towards Dawnstar’s direction at high speed. He was a supreme Daolord; a single Voidsea Jadeseal would only allow him to partially simulate the Daomerge. He naturally felt that the more seals he had, the better!

In the eyes of Daolords, although the local fruit was valuable it was of no use to the Daomerge. None of those things truly mattered. The Daomerge was what supreme Daolords like Winesage cared about the most, and so they paid much less attention to the third world.

“Let’s go.” Ning looked at Ninedust.

“Are we really not going to take part? Darknorth, if we go we’ll at least have a chance,” Ninedust said. Now that he had acquired a Voidsea Jadeseal for himself, he naturally wanted to help Ning fight for one as well.

“More and more supreme Daolords are arriving. What they can’t have, they won’t let others have either,” Ning said. “The fight over the last Voidsea Jadeseal will be a furious one; our chances are less than one in ten.”

Ninedust argued, “But even if our chances are slim, we should still give it a shot.”

“We can do that later. Push comes to shove, we can take it from the person who wins it.” Ning walked straight towards the throne. Ninedust nodded then followed him as well.

Boom! A surge of power spread out from the throne and encompassed both Ning and Ninedust. Swoosh! The two of them vanished without a trace.

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There were a number of reasons as to why Ning had opted not to take part.

First of all, there were simply too many supreme Daolords present. Even if they weren't able to beat Ning, they'd be able to obstruct him.

Second, Ning belonged to the Brightshore Kingdom. Brightshore Kingdom members had all sworn oaths not to fight against other members of the kingdom! Ninestone, Palace Lord Cloudwalker, Palace Lord Dawnstar... Ning wasn't even able to battle against them! In a wild group melee like this, it would be like him fighting with a handicap. This further lowered his chances of winning a Voidsea Jade seal.

Third, the Voidsea Jade seals were of very limited use to Ning. Once he became a Daolord of the Fourth Step, the power of his Omega Sword Dao would reach an incredibly terrifying level; most likely, the Voidsea Jade seal would only be able to simulate a tiny, tiny portion of the Daomerge for his Omega Sword Dao. Other supreme Daolords would be able to simulate half of the Daomerge, which would be of invaluable assistance, but for Ning the benefit would be fairly minimal.

Fourth, Ning cared more about reviving his wife Yu Wei. If he could reunite his family again, he'd be satisfied with merely living 108,000 chaos cycles! The Daomerge wasn't something others could help him with, but saving Yu Wei was. He needed to acquire enough treasure so that he could ask some truly mighty figures to assist him! Given that even the Hegemons and the Dao Alliance had gone crazy over the fruits of Crimsonwave Temple, he naturally had to harvest as much as he could.

Whoosh! Ning felt a cold breeze stir past him. He hurriedly inspected his surroundings.

He stood atop a cold, ancient-looking stone island, and in front of him was an unfathomably deep abyss. A long, icy set of seven-colored chains stretched off into the distance, where it connected to another distant and levitating stone island. That second stone island had a gold-black octahedral command talisman levitating above it, with some strange runes right above it. Ning immediately recognized the runes as symbolizing the

word 'three'.

Behind that stone island was yet another deep abyss. A tri-colored set of chains stretched out from the stone island and across the abyss to a sacrificial altar that had another command talisman at the bottom. This one had runes symbolizing the word 'five' hovering right above it. The altar had a series of steps leading up to it, and at the very top of the altar there lay a command talisman that had strange runes symbolizing the word 'eight' above it.

"Three, five, and eight?" Ning was intrigued.

"Darknorth, the Grovekeeper said that there are nine command talismans in total. The ninth one is the most valuable, with the second most valuable being the sixth, seventh, and eighth talismans. Next in value come the third, fourth, and fifth talismans, while the first and second ones are the least valuable," Ninedust said. Ning nodded.

Whoosh! Rainbow light coalesced next to them, resolving into the form of a white-robed man. It was Realmsoul Polo, and he smiled at Ning and Ninedust. "The two of you moved quite quickly. You came straight to the third world! The battle in the second world is still proceeding quite fiercely; given your power, the two of you might stand a chance."

"We've decided to try and acquire as much fruit as we can instead," Ning said.

"Alright." Realmsoul Polo explained, "The rules in the third world are a bit different. Each Daolord can only choose a single corridor to proceed through." As he spoke, he waved his hand and caused the mist at the horizons to vanish, revealing two other places. Once again they saw floating islands, abysses, and altars.

"The third world has three passageways," Realmsoul Polo said. "Once you enter one of the passageways, you cannot enter any of the other ones. This is a mechanism to prevent any single Daolord from acquiring too many of the command talismans."

Ning and Ninedust nodded slightly.

“But can we take them from others by force?” Ning suddenly asked.

“Haha. If you are strong enough to seize command talismans from other Daolords, go for it. I won’t mind even if you manage to acquire all of them,” Realmsoul Polo said. “The command talismans for these three passageways are of varying values, but on the whole the difference between the three passageways isn’t that great. Go ahead and choose one of the passageways. Oh! As the first to reach the third world, I’ll give you one piece of advice; the ninth command talisman is extremely, extremely valuable.” After speaking, the realmsoul let out a chuckle and vanished.

“Darknorth?” Ninedust looked at Ning.

“Let’s go take a look at the other passageways to take a look,” Ning said.

“Let’s go.” Ninedust and Ning immediately transformed into streaks of light that flew towards one of the other passageways. Soon, they had passed through the other two regions and reached their destination.

Ning and Ninedust possessed astounding ocularity clarity and were thus able to see the three command seals within this passageway right away. They were the first, the fourth, and the ninth.

“The ninth talisman is here.” Ning said solemnly, “Then that means the final passageway holds the second, the sixth, and the seventh talismans.”

The three passageways were separated thusly:

The first passageway held the first, fourth, and ninth command talismans.

The second passageway held the second, sixth, and seventh command talismans.

The third passageway held the third, fifth, and eighth command talismans.

“The total value in each of three passageways is roughly the same, but since the fruits harvested by the ninth command talisman ripen once every 100,000 chaos cycles, they are more valuable than all other fruits. The rarer a fruit is, the more irreplaceable it is,” Ning said. “I choose this

passageway. I have to get the ninth command talisman.”

After studying the [Seven Leafpill Chapters], Ning knew a great deal regarding the Dao of Alchemy. Some alchemical materials were interchangeable with others, with just the price being changed slightly. The rarer an item was, however, the more important it generally was as a principal ingredient.

The ninth command talisman allowed the harvesting of the only fruits which ripened every 100,000 chaos cycles. Most likely, it was of the most interest to Eternal Emperors! They might be able to pay several times more than the ‘market’ rate for it. Ning’s hopes of reviving Yu Wei rested on this fruit.

“Then I’ll choose the other tunnel, the one with the second, sixth, and seventh command talismans,” Ninedust said.

“If we move separately, then...” Ning was a bit hesitant.

“Don’t worry.” Ninedust smiled. “I have my invulnerable aquaform; no one can kill me! And every single Daolord can only choose a single passageway; if you choose this one, that means the two of us can at most acquire three of those talismans. If we move separately, we can perhaps acquire a total of six! Haha. So long as I acquire any of them, they’ll all belong to you, Darknorth! You helped me acquire the Voidsea Jadeseal; now, it is my time to help you acquire the command talismans. Although these things aren’t nearly as valuable as Voidsea Jadeseals to us Daolords, I really don’t have anything better to offer you. There’s no way I’m handing out the seal I acquired to anyone, you included.”

Chapter 13: Speechless

“Haha, done.” Ji Ning understood what his friend was trying to do; Ninedust didn’t feel comfortable accepting the Voidsea Jadeseal without doing anything for Ning in return. At their level, Daolords were unwilling to do actions that went against their basic nature and caused them to feel guilty. They would strive to repay any favors that were owed.

But of course, there were some truly vile Daolords whose Daohearts were as vile as they were. Backstabbing, betrayal, robbery, deceit... they could do anything, because this was the nature of their Daoheart! As a result, these evil Daolords generally had few to no truly good friends. Timedream was a good example; he had relied on applying heartforce techniques to the Kingfreak when the later was young and weak, slowly guiding the Kingfreak into being utterly devoted to him.

“We’ll probably spend quite a bit of time here in the third world,” Ning said. “You can spend a month using up the Voidsea Jadeseal first. That way, you can publicly swear a lifeblood oath that you’ve already used it and thus will no longer be pursued or attacked by the other Daolords.”

“Right.” Ninedust nodded. “Understood. I’ll be leaving now.” Whoosh. Ninedust flew towards a different passageway, with Ning watching as he left.

Ning then turned towards his own passageway. This was what mattered the most to him; he had to walk to the end of this passageway and acquire the ninth command talisman.

“That stone pillar...?” Ning stared at a rhomboid-shaped pillar at the edges of the abyss. The pillar was covered with many dense runes. These runes didn’t seem nearly as profound as the Dreamdust script, the azureflower runes, or the ‘Crimson Wave Temple’ runes, but they were still unlike any script that Ning had ever seen before. Despite that, Ning immediately understood what they meant.

“If I wish to pass through the first abyss, I must first learn the [Vitalis] technique...” Ning was dazed by what he read.

All living creatures had their own, distinct life auras. These auras came from the distinctive characteristics of their souls and truesouls. No type of divine ability or transformation could truly disguise this. The likes of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] and other similar techniques could mask or simulate certain aura ‘leaks’, but the intrinsic life aura itself could not be changed! The aura each soul and truesoul had was the best way of verifying or attesting to who a person was.

“B-b-b-but... this [Vitalis] technique can actually change a truesoul’s life aura?” Ning could hardly believe this. “If even a truesoul’s life aura can be changed... then they could use a casual disguise and I would be completely unable to recognize them!”

Terrifying, utterly terrifying. For example, if someone transformed into Patriarch Subhuti and appeared in front of Ning, if even the truesoul life aura was imitated then Ning would be tricked. If caught off-guard in such a manner, Ning could very well fall for a sneak attack!

“The Sithe were utterly terrifying. How could they have come up with a technique like this? I’ve never even heard of such techniques in the Endless Territories, but the Sithe put it within the third world. Clearly, many of their supreme Daolords must’ve known this technique.” Ning was secretly terrified. If even their Daolords were this terrifying, how deadly had their Eternal Emperors had been?

No wonder the Sithe had once sought to conquer and enslave all other cultivators. Apparently, even the Terror Starsea was nothing more than one of many battlefields where the Dawn War had occurred.

“Whew.” Ning quickly read and memorized the [Vitalis] technique. Only then did he let out a sigh of relief. The [Vitalis] technique wasn’t completely flawless; for example, close friends and loved ones could often tell what their counterparts were thinking from a single glance or gesture. If someone else had merely transformed and used the [Vitalis] technique, that person would be unable to duplicate that sort of tacit understanding. This was one of the most basic flaws.

However, if one wasn’t aware of the [Vitalis] technique and also sensed

that the true soul life aura was that of a loved one's, one generally wouldn't think too much of it even if their counterpart was acting rather oddly. They'd think that their counterpart was probably worried or frustrated about something and thus was acting rather differently. This wasn't that big of a flaw.

The true, major flaw with the [Vitalis] technique was that of karma!

Karma was a system of cause and effect that linked all things! This was one of the highest level and yet most understated webs that tied and bound all individuals. There were some who were so skilled in karma that when they slew a foe, they would be able to use their karmic senses to trace down that enemy's Primal twin and avatars and wipe them out as well!

Anyone you had befriended or even so much as spoken to would be connected to you by karma. Ning, for example, was very tightly bound to his friends and loved ones by karmic threads. He was even connected by karma to the Brightshore Hegemon and Emperor Goldisle of the Dao Alliance, as he had met and spoken with both separately.

If anyone dared to imitate Ning and appear before Hegemon Brightshore... given how strong Hegemon Brightshore was, he was probably able of karmic scrying! He would be able to instantly tell that there were no pre-existing karmic ties between him and the person in front of him and thus could be certain that it definitely was not Ji Ning.

"There are almost no Daolords capable of sensing and scrying karma." Ning shook his head. "Not even the majority of Eternal Emperors are capable of this. You have to be a specialist in karma or have reached an incredible level of power."

All Daos shared certain commonalities. Ning didn't specifically study the Dao of Time or the Dao of Space, but he had reached such inconceivable heights in the Dao of the Sword that he was able to transcend both space and time. Similarly, the power within the Sword Hegemon's Dao-seal was so great that it could freeze and suppress both spacetime as well as karmic scrying.

“This [Vitalis] technique is still an incredible technique,” Ning mused to himself. If he managed to learn this technique, he could for example imitate someone else and go pay a visit to Hegemon Netherlily of the Ancient cultivators! Since Hegemon Netherlily had never seen him before and there were no karmic ties between them, Ning probably would be able to deceive her.

Thus, this technique was a superb and terrifying technique for disguising one’s self and infiltrating other organizations.

“The Sithe probably relied on this technique to arrange for many Daolord spies to be sent into the various cultivator organizations,” Ning mused. “However, the Sithe have already been destroyed. Even their techniques have fallen into the hands of us cultivators.”

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Each of the seven colors of the rainbow chains which stretched across the first abyss represented a type of truesoul life aura! One had to be able to transform one’s life aura to match those chains in order to safely traverse them. If the truesoul aura was not imitated perfectly, then one would be swept into that endless abyss and perish!

The Sithe used very brutal methods to train their Daolords.

“[Vitalis]...” After learning this technique, Ning felt more and more certain that the Sithe had reached truly inconceivable heights in certain areas. For example, their mastery of truesoul-related techniques clearly surpassed that of the Endless Territories by a significant amount. Otherwise, they would never have been able to create a technique such as this.

What Ning didn’t know was that although the Sithe had been exterminated, the many treasures and techniques they had left behind were furiously fought over in countless places. Crimsonwave Temple was nothing more than one of the many relic sites left behind by the Sithe.

“Focus.” Ning made use of his temporal acceleration treasure. Years passed inside although just half a month or so had gone by outside. He was now able to use a tiny amount of his truesoul and godsense to form a

'lifecloak' around him, with the lifecloak capable of simulating any truesoul aura Ning had met before.

This amount of his truesoul and godsense was of negligible impact to Ning. He was a heartforce cultivator, after all, and a very high-level one at that. Learning this technique was thus quite easy for him.

"Success." Ning put away the spacetime cabin and turned to stare at the stone pillar. He sighed silently, "Their abilities were utterly unearthly, but their ambitions were simply too vast. In the end, they were wiped out!"

Ning understood that the little he knew about the Sithe came from what Realmsoul Polo and the Grovekeeper had told him. He realized that this was nothing more than the tip of an iceberg, and that he still knew very little as to what the truth was.

The Grovekeeper had merely been an artificial construct created by the Sithe race in order to take care of the trees here in Crimsonwave Temple. He had never been able to leave this place. As for Realmsoul Polo, he was nothing more than a servant of Emperor Waveshift's.

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Ning stood there atop the seven-colored chains, every single colored chain containing a different truesoul aura. The different colors all stretched out across several meters, allowing the Daolords enough time to falsify their truesoul auras.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh.

Ning continuously transformed. First he was a terrifying demon, then he became a suave and graceful cultivator. If they closed their eyes, not even Brightmoon or Patriarch Subhuti would be able to recognize that this aura came from Ji Ning.

Soon, Ning traversed the entire set of chains and reached the giant rocky island on the other side.

"The first command talisman." Ning stared at the octahedral black-gold command talisman levitating in the air, then reached out to grab it. The command talisman's surface was warm on one side but cool on the other,

and the temperatures on each side continuously alternated. This first command talisman, along with the second command talisman, were amongst the least valuable of the command talismans. However, the fruit they gave access to only ripened once every 30,000 chaos cycles. Given that the Sithe were willing to place such valuable trees here in Crimsonwave Palace, the fruit would definitely still be extraordinary.

“One talisman down. Keep going.” Ning stared off into the distance towards the tri-colored chains leading across the second abyss. At the end of the tri-colored chains was the altar which held the fourth command talisman at the bottom! At the very top of the altar was the ninth command talisman.

“Eh?” Ning stared at the stone pillar which stood deep at the ends of the second abyss. “If I wish to pass through the second abyss, I must master the [Daoheart] technique...” This stone pillar was also covered with dense runic script that explained yet another mysterious, ancient technique of the Sithe race.

He had been stunned when he saw the [Vitalis] technique. This time, he had already mentally fortified himself, but upon seeing the [Daoheart] technique he was still completely dumbfounded.

Chapter 14: [Daoheart]

Whoosh. A cold wind blew out from the deep abyss in front of Ji Ning. Ning however just stood there blankly, not seeming to even notice it at all.

The [Vitalis] technique allowed one to disguise one's true soul aura. It could merely be described as a rare technique that wasn't really of much use for either the Dao merge or cultivation in general. This [Daoheart] technique, however, was of enormous benefit to cultivators!

For cultivators, the Daoheart mattered more than anything else! Without a sufficiently strong Daoheart, you couldn't even so much as become a Celestial Immortal. Once your Daoheart collapsed, you might even fail to control the powerful Immortal energy coursing through your body, resulting in death via self-detonation! All Samsara Daolords, especially supreme ones, had incredibly formidable Daohearts.

Usually, the stronger a person was the more powerful his Daoheart would be as well, which meant that on average Eternal Emperors had stronger Daohearts than Samsara Daolords did. But of course, there were a few extremely rare exceptions.

When Ninedust had been poisoned by that redscatter venom, he had been in such agony that he wanted Ning to kill him. The redscatter venom had originally been devised for usage against powerful Eternal Emperors, who had very strong Daohearts. It would weaken them, but it wouldn't incapacitate them to the point where they would beg for death. This alone was a testament as to the difference in Daohearts between Ninedust and powerful Eternal Emperors.

However, as more time passed Ninedust's Daoheart had been tempered and strengthened by the redscatter venom. Towards the late stages of his poisoning, he had no longer screamed in pain. If someone was to apply redscatter venom to him again, he might be dramatically weakened but he wouldn't beg for death. This signified that his Daoheart had improved!

"Redscatter venom is terrifying, but it's also a good treasure for tempering one's Daoheart. Alas, the effect only lasts for twelve days," Ning

mused. In the end, twelve days simply wasn't long enough, especially given how incredibly rare and expensive redscatter venom was. When applied at the right time in a duel between Eternal Emperors, it could allow one to be able to slay a foe outright. Hence, no one would be so wasteful as to use it to temper the Daoheart.

"This [Daoheart] technique... once you use it, you'll suffer such tremendous agony that you'll feel as though you've been hit by redscatter venom!" Ning was truly stunned.

It sounded quite simple; it was nothing more than a pain technique, right? But it must be understood that supreme Daolords had such incredibly formidable Daohearts that they would calmly smile in the face of death itself! To cause them to feel such agonizing pain that they would be at the verge of suffering a mental breakdown was incredibly hard to do. That was what made the redscatter venom so valuable! This [Daoheart] technique, however, was able to cause increasingly terrifying levels of pain. This sort of technique was completely unheard of in the Endless Territories!

According to the records, the [Daoheart] technique was divided up into seven levels of heart purgatories. Even the very first level was enough to cause tremendous agony to a supreme Daolord, and the higher levels were even worse. The seventh purgatory was so agonizing that supreme Daolords could instantly see their truesouls shattered and destroyed from the pain!

Ning stared at the stone pillar before him. "This stone pillar has only recorded down the first three purgatories; only Eternal Emperors will have the chance to learn the fourth to seventh purgatories! It seems as though even the Sithe Daolords were only able to train in the first three. I have to be able to master the first three purgatories if I wish to be able to traverse the tri-colored chains."

Each of the three colored sections of the tri-colored chains in front of him would cause an agonizing amount of pain to fill his body. One had to have mastered the first three purgatories in order to safely cross the chains.

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“Time to begin!”

A cold wind howled past the white-robed Ning as he waved his hand, causing the temporal acceleration cabin to appear next to him. Ning entered the log cabin, then began to train.

“Mo...ya...ta...” Ning’s soul began to recite the words to this technique. This was a soul voice with a strange cadence and profound melody to it. Slowly, Ning began to feel an increasing level of pain. This pain filled every inch of his body and began to grow stronger and stronger as Ning continued the chant. The longer he chanted, the greater the pain he felt. After an hour had passed, Ning’s forehead was creased in a frown and a fierce look was in his eyes.

“...kong...la...luo...Sithe.” Ning finished chanting through the first purgatory and opened his eyes, his forehead matted with sweat.

“How terrifying. It has been a long, long time since I’ve felt as much pain as this... but it was still within the realm of what I could tolerate.” Ning immediately shut his eyes and began to work on the second purgatory.

Ning was the most powerful Heartforce Cultivator of the Endless Territories and the master of the Omega Sword Dao. His Daoheart was already incredibly strong!

Even if he wasn’t a Heartforce Cultivator, his Daoheart still would’ve been quite strong. Long ago, he had been stuck at the fourth stage of heartforce, ‘mortal dust’, because of his stubborn attachment to his parents. As a result, he had been unable to calm his mind and heart enough to reach the fifth stage of heartforce, ‘truth’. However, his determination to revive his parents was so strong that his Daoheart was still incredibly strong even then. Similarly, there were many Eternal Emperors and even Hegemons who were not Heartforce Cultivators but who had Daohearts of inconceivable strength.

But of course... Heartforce Cultivators would by definition have extremely strong Daohearts! Even then, however, there were variations amongst Heartforce Cultivators. Some were stronger, some were weaker. Ji

Ning, Timedream, Cloudwalker, Winesage... their Daohearts naturally were ranked in this order from first to fourth.

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“...tian...fu...can...Sithe.” Ning’s face was completely red, and his veins were bulging out of his trembling body. Despite that, he still managed to forcibly and fully recite the second purgatory.

“I’ve finished the second purgatory as well.” Ning wasn’t very happy. The fact that he was able to master the first and second purgatories so easily meant that they would be of little to no use to him.

“Time for the third purgatory of the [Daoheart] technique... the Jinayi purgatory.”

Ning took a deep breath, allowing his protruding veins to settle back down and the color of his skin to go back to normal. “Zi...mi...shi...ya...” Ning began to recite the words to the third purgatory.

Agony!

It was like a colossal mountain of pain had just come crashing down upon his fragile body. He almost immediately felt as though he was about to suffer a mental breakdown. Although Ning had a powerful Daoheart and things he cared immensely about, he currently had a feeling of incredible weakness, as though he wasn’t able to hold on for much longer and was about to collapse.”

Clack clack clack clack... Ning just sat there in the lotus position, but sweat was pouring down his face and the bones in his body were clacking and cracking. His muscles and his tendons were at the point of tearing apart, and even his gums were beginning to ooze blood that began to drip out from the corners of his lips. Ning, however, didn’t notice any of this at all.

His Daoheart was completely focused on guarding his spirit and his beliefs while his soul continued to chant the words to the technique. The pain continued to increase! Everything in front of him began to turn black as all sound disappeared from the world. There was nothing aside from

the endless pain!

“Ah...” Ning suddenly felt his entire mind go blank. His soul naturally stopped chanting the words to the technique and the agony quickly receded, allowing him to regain consciousness.

He lowered his head to look at himself. His arms and his crossed legs were all matted with sweat, with a few rivulets of blood splattered in.

“I was in such pain that I couldn’t even continue to chant that mantra.” Ning actually smiled delightedly at this discovery. “Hahaha! Good, good! That means my Daoheart isn’t strong enough yet. I wasn’t even able to master the third purgatory of the [Daoheart] technique on my first try. Since the Sithe used this to train supreme Daolords, that means the most powerful Sithe Daolords had even stronger Daohearts than me.”

“Haha. At least the third purgatory of the [Daoheart] technique is of use to me.” Ning was delighted. If he had passed on his first try, that would’ve meant that the third purgatory was similarly useless.

“Let’s do this again. The pain I felt was less than what Ninedust went through,” Ning mused. It wasn’t that the third purgatory of the [Daoheart] technique was weaker than the effects of the redscatter venom; Ning wasn’t able to judge that. All pain, however, was relative. The redscatter venom and the agony it brought had been enough to cause Ninedust to scream in agony and beg for Ning to kill him! However, if it had been Hegemon Brightshore who had been struck by the poison, he would’ve been able to continue smiling and laughing without seeming to feel a thing. Pain was a relative concept. The pain brought by the third purgatory of the [Daoheart] technique was at most able to prevent Ning from continuing his chanting.

However... the redscatter venom caused Ninedust endless pain without end, pain for a full twelve days.

“Continue.” Ning once more began to chant the mantra. The seven stages to this [Daoheart] technique were known as the seven purgatories of the heart. Amongst the Sithe, even the most supreme of Daolords were only able to master the first three purgatories.

The first three purgatories were viewed as nightmares by even those supreme Sithe Daolords! They generally would spend countless years training before each abyss, suffering endless mental torment. If they were unable to completely master the technique within a single chaos cycle, the Sithe would forcibly remove them from this place. Only some of their supreme Daolords were able to master all three of the purgatories.

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One attempt after another. Ning's soul continuously chanted the mantra to the technique, enduring the endless agonizing that descended upon him. Each time, the agony caused him to despair and drove him unconscious. The pain was simply beyond what he could endure, and so he failed again and again. Each time, his only goal was to increase his limit further and further.

While training, Ning set up fairly simple barriers and wards around him. Once anyone came, Ning would naturally be alerted by it. Thus, he was able to completely invest himself in training.

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Time continued to flow on. As Ning continued to suffer more and more torment, he was able to recite the mantra for longer periods of time. After a total of twenty-one years...

"...qian...fu...la...jie...na...yi...Sithe." Ning finally completed his recital of the third purgatory's mantra. Although he was wracked by agony, he was at least able to maintain the presence of mind to finish the recital.

"Success." Ning opened his eyes.

Whoosh. Ning waved his hand, putting away the temporal acceleration cabin. He then stared at the stone pillar for a moment, then walked towards the tri-colored chains.

By now, a large group of supreme Daolords had descended upon the second world, where the furious fight over the final Voidsea Dao seal continued.

Chapter 15: Nine Hundred Years

As Ji Ning walked across the tri-colored chains, he could sense throbs of pain reach out to him from his feet and then spread throughout his body. He continued to advance one step at a time, but his body began to quiver. He gritted his teeth, enduring the pain.

“For these chains to be able to cause so much pain for so many years to so many people... they must be valuable treasures.” Although Ning was agonized, he maintained enough clarity of mind to murmur softly to himself.

Finally, he finished traversing the tri-colored chains.

“The fourth command talisman.” Ning stared at the ancient black-gold talisman, then reached out and grabbed it. Ning raised his head to stare upwards at the steps that led to the top of the altar. At the very top levitated the extremely precious ninth command talisman.

Swoosh.

Ning strode forward towards, beginning to move up the various steps. There were a total of 8003 steps to this great altar. Rainbow light suddenly manifested at the very top of the altar, resolving into a white-robed figure. Realmsoul Polo smiled as he walked downwards towards Ning.

“Realmsoul Polo?” Ning was startled.

The realmsoul glanced at Ning, then smiled. “Darknorth, you are quite fast. You were able to master both [Vitalis] and [Daoheart] quite quickly.”

“Are there any other new techniques in this altar?” Ning asked.

“None.” The realmsoul shook his head. “You should celebrate the fact that you learned two such exquisite techniques. How numerous do you take them for? As for the altar... this altar has a total of 9000 wards and barriers. If you can defeat all 9000 of them, you’ll be able to acquire the incredibly precious ninth command talisman.”

As he spoke, he waved his sleeves. Swoosh! Triangular motes of golden

light immediately appeared at the top of the altar. The light spread out to form multiple layers of barriers that repeatedly folded in on each other, forming a dazzling golden barrier. Ning could immediately tell that there were indeed thousands of layers to this formation; although he couldn't count the exact number, 9000 was a distinct possibility.

“Will the barriers automatically regenerate?” Ning asked. If they were to immediately regenerate, then he would have to break through all 9000 in a single strike.

“Hahaha, if they automatically regenerated, you could be ten times as strong as you currently are and still fail to break through.” Realmsoul Polo relaxed off to one side as he watched.

“Good.” Ning immediately manifested three heads and six arms. All six of the golden swords on his back came flying out and landed within his hands.

“Let's go.” Ning willed it, and a barrier immediately appeared next to him which quickly expanded to cover the entire altar.

Temporal acceleration... 100x acceleration!

The altar was not alive and thus it didn't cause too much energy to be used up to accelerate time for it.

“Oh, quite clever.” Realmsoul Polo smiled as he watched from the side.

“This is the final challenge in the third world, after all. I'll wager it won't be that easy to beat,” Ning said. Moments later, a sharp light flashed through his eyes. “Suppress!”

Ning willed his massive heartworld projection to come crashing down. A heartbeat later, his nine novessence arts came out in the form of energy dragons, coiling together to form a Yin-Yang Chaos Domain in accordance with the principles of the Omega Sword Dao – Yin Yang which furiously pressed down against the altar. Even though the altar was now suffering the combined pressures of the heartworld projection and the nine novessence arts, the 9000 barriers were still able to easily endure.

“Break!” Ning immediately executed his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop

while applying the [Heartsword] technique.

Sword-light flashed through the air as Ning's mist-formed sword stabbed against the barrier, moving faster than a hundred times the speed of light. The first barrier was pierced through like paper, but the power of the strike was greatly reduced. In the end, the mist-formed sword was unable to stab through the second barrier.

"Eh, just so-so. This speed indicates that it'll take me perhaps one day to break through all 9000 barriers. It seems setting up a temporal acceleration field was overkill." Ning spoke in an intentionally arrogant manner while giving Realmsoul Polo a meaningful glance.

"Don't get cocky." Realmsoul Polo watched from afar, an amused smile on his face. "The ninth command seal won't be so easily acquired."

Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash! Ning struck out repeatedly against the barriers, piercing through a total of 151 barriers. The next time Ning struck out, he wasn't able to break through the barrier.

"The barriers are increasing in strength." Ning frowned, then revealed a smile. "Still, at least the barriers weaken each time I attack them. They don't regenerate even when they are weakened but not breached." For example, although the 152nd barrier was not destroyed by Ning's full-strength strike, it had dimmed and was clearly much weaker than it had been previously.

So long as the barrier didn't recover its energy, then he would eventually be able to break through the 9000 barriers given enough time.

"Break! Break! Break!" Ning quickly struck out with his six Northbow swords, applying the Blood Drop stance each time. The Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop's greatest strength lay in its penetrative power!

When dealing with barriers, this sort of penetrating attack was the best type of attack to use. In addition, the Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop was Ning's most powerful attack! This naturally made the breaching process quite fast.

Slash! Slash! Slash! The six Northbow swords continuously struck out as

fast as illusions. One mist-formed sword after another struck out against the barriers, causing the barriers to quickly disperse under the weight of the barrage of attacks.

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After roughly half a day, Ning broke through the 1000th barrier.

After roughly six days, Ning broke through the 2000th barrier.

After roughly half a month, Ning broke through the 3000th barrier.

After roughly nine months, Ning broke through the 4000th barrier.

After nearly half a year, Ning broke through the 5000th barrier.

“I underestimated these 9000 barriers.” Ning was furiously assaulting the 5001st barrier with his six Northbow swords. This barrier was extremely tough; when Ning first assaulted it, he felt as though he couldn’t breach it at all, that the barrier wasn’t even weakening in the slightest. Only after more than ten thousand strikes did the barrier slowly begin to weaken, and once it did it began to weaken at a very fast rate. In the end, it finally collapsed.

“These barriers... they are strong enough that not even a full-strength blow from the eight lords of the Sacred Cities would be able to breach them,” Ning mused.

The barriers were so much more powerful than his attacks that his strikes were like drops of water sprinkled across stones, having virtually no impact at all. However, given enough time the wind and the rain could wear down even the mightiest of mountains! When the barrier finally dropped down close to Ning’s level of power, Ning would naturally be able to sense it begin to weaken and break down.

“I still haven’t been able to master the eleventh stance of the [Heartsword].” In recent days, Ning had been working on the eleventh stance of the [Heartsword] technique, the ‘Teardrop’ strike.

The eighth to tenth stances of the [Heartsword] represented a tier, while the eleventh to twelfth stances represented a different tier. Each tier

represented a qualitative transformation!

Ning was so incredibly talented that in just a few short decades he was able to go from the eighth stance to the tenth stance, but these three stances belonged to the same tier. The difficulty of the eleventh stance, however, was on a completely different level from the tenth.

“I was over-confident. No wonder the records regarding the [Heartsword] stated that the number of people in each generation who could master the eleventh or twelfth stances could be counted on one hand! Even the most talented of swordsmen who have been alive for 108,000 chaos cycles find it hard to reach this level, while I’ve spent just ten or so years on it.” Ning regained his normal calm, then smiled. “In recent years, I’ve been focusing on my Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop. I feel as though I’ve gained quite a few insights into it. Perhaps I’ll break through with it.”

In the past five years, Ning had unleashed countless strikes with the Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop. By now, he had more insights into the Blood Drop stance than any of the other four stances, and so it stood the best chance of reaching the fourth stage. If he could reach the fourth stage with his Blood Drop stance, then the power of his Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop would increase yet again.

“Continue.” Ning continued to furiously strike out with his sword, even though he felt almost like an ant trying to move a mountain.

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After nearly twenty years, Ning broke through the 6000th barrier.

After nearly a century, Ning broke through the 7000th barrier.

After nearly three centuries, Ning broke through the 8000th barrier.

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Ning’s [Heartsword] and his Blood Drop stance had yet to make any breakthroughs. Although he had gained some insights, especially after having used the Blood Drop stance so many times and after having spent so much time working on upgrading it, he still hadn’t been able to reach

the fourth stage. His improvements were rapid, but it still wasn't enough. This was a sign as to how hard it would be to reach the fourth stage with all five stances. As for fusing them together into a fourth-stage Omega Sword Dao? How difficult would that be?"

Slash! Slash! Slash! A furious barrage of mist-formed sword energy lashed out in an illusory fashion, stabbing against the final barrier. Finally, an explosion boomed out!

After more than 900 years here at the altar, Ning had finally managed to defeat the final barrier.

"I finally breached it." Ning revealed a delighted look. He had spent over 900 years furiously assaulting the barrier nonstop. Ning had never done something like this before!

"The ninth command talisman." Ning walked to the ninth command talisman, then reached out and grabbed it.

"Hahaha..." Realmsoul Polo began laughing from up high, his voice echoing throughout every inch of Crimsonwave Temple. "Daolords, the ninth command talisman for harvesting fruit has already been acquired by Daolord Darknorth! The rest of you need to hurry up!"

"You actually..." Ning raised his head to stare at Realmsoul Polo, shocked.

"The command talismans won't be won that easily." Realmsoul Polo looked down at Ning, a smile playing on his lips. "You can rob others of them, but others can rob you of them as well."

Chapter 16: Consecutive Deaths

“They can try.” Ji Ning really wasn’t afraid at all. He then raised his head to look at the realmsoul and asked, “Senior, how am I to return to the second world?”

“Simple. Every single world has a map diagram covering the ground.” Realmsoul Polo pointed towards the great floating island Ning had started off on. It was true that the floating island did indeed have a inky circular diagram that was roughly nine meters in diameter, and the diagram was covered with black runes that seemed quite mysterious.

“Just step into that diagram. In ten breaths worth of time, you’ll be transported straight to the throne of the second world. The second world and the first world both have similar diagrams in them,” Realmsoul Polo said.

“Oh?” Ning thought back to what he had seen. Indeed, it was true. However, since Crimsonwave Temple was covered with so many sculptures, paintings, and diagrams, at the time Ning hadn’t realized the inky circle had meant anything.

“To the second world, then.” Ning put away the ninth command talisman, then immediately transformed into a streak of light as he flew down the dais. He first walked past the tri-colored chains, enduring the pain they brought him, then continuously shifted his truesoul aura as he walked past the seven-colored chains.

“The last Voidsea Jadeseal has been seized by Daolord Feich!” Realmsoul Polo’s voice reverberated throughout every inch of Crimsonwave Temple. “All three of the remaining Voidsea Jadeseals have been collected. Daolords, hurry up and do your best to acquire the command talismans. They are far more valuable than the Voidsea Jadeseals, and every single talisman is more than valuable enough to drive Eternal Emperors mad with desire. They represent enormous amounts of valuable fruits... and right now, only five of them remain!”

Ning was still walking on the seven-colored chains. When he heard

Realmsoul Polo said this, he couldn't help but feel so angry that he ground his teeth until they nearly broke. The realmsoul really wanted to just see the world thrown into chaos!

However, the realmsoul had merely spoken the truth. The fruits truly were more valuable than the Voidsea Jadeseals! Even Hegemons grew excited over these fruits, while the Dao Alliance was dazzled by the prospect of acquiring them. In terms of price and value, they were indeed far more valuable than Voidsea Jadeseals! To Daolords, however, supreme Daomerge treasures were naturally more important than anything else, no matter how valuable.

"Only five of the command talismans remain? It seems Ninedust has acquired one as well." Ning had been planning to head to the second world, but after exiting the seven-colored chains he immediately flew like a streak of light towards the Ninedust Sectlord's location.

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Whoosh. "Ah, good. They haven't arrived yet," Ning mused to himself as he reached Ninedust's passageway.

At present, the only person within the passageway was Ninedust and Ninedust alone! What Ning didn't realize was that when Realmsoul Polo had publicly announced that he had acquired the ninth command talisman, all of the supreme Daolords who had been fighting over the Voidsea Jadeseal in the second world began to grow anxious. "That means Darknorth is probably going to come here and fight with us over the Voidsea Jadeseal as well. His assassination arts are extremely terrifying to deal with. We need to end this faster!"

The battle had already been ferocious to begin with. Once word that Ning might be arriving spread, the battle reached a fever pitch before finally Daolord Feich ended up seizing the Voidsea Jadeseal.

Although he had managed to acquire it, he was a low-key supreme Daolord who was only on par with Fiendqueen Dustrain and the others. The other Daolords weren't willing to accept this result and so the battle continued.

“Eh?” Ning arrived at Ninedust’s passageway. He immediately saw the rhomboid stone pillar and the words atop of it introducing the [Vitalis] art. When he then looked at the seven-colored chains and the tri-colored chains, he immediately understood that all of the passageways contained the same techniques with them.

Ning had been hoping that perhaps the three passageways would all contain different techniques!

“Ninedust is still inside.” Ning stared at the temporal acceleration cottage in front of the tri-colored chains. Ninedust was inside that cottage. “It seems he has yet to master the [Daoheart] technique.”

In terms of Daoheart strength, Ning was indeed significantly superior to Ninedust; Ning was a Heartforce Cultivator, after all!

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The third world, Ninedust’s passageway. Ning sat there on the rocky ground in the lotus position by himself. Due to the barrier in front of him, there was no way for him to step onto the rainbow chains. Each supreme Daolords was only permitted to choose one passageway; there was no way to enter the other ones.

After waiting for four full hours, Ning suddenly opened his eyes.

Whoosh! A streak of light flew towards him, resolving into the form of a black-robed figure who looked at the seated Ning. The black-robed figure said, “Brother Darknorth, I must congratulate you. If I had known things would end up like this, I would’ve joined you in fighting over the command talismans.”

“Brother Winesage, my guess is that most of the other supreme Daolords have joined forces.” Ning rose to his feet. “It looks as though you are still on your own. Why don’t you join forces with me and Ninedust?”

“Haha, why should I join forces with anyone?” Winesage scanned the area. “Darknorth, can you tell me which passageway still has all of its command talismans?”

“That one.” Ning pointed towards the third passageway.

“Thank you.” Winesage immediately flew in that direction.

Just a short while later, Ning saw a large group of individuals be teleported into the third world atop the stone island before him. There were a total of twelve supreme Daolords, with the leader being a devilish violet-robed figure whose eyes gleamed with violet light and who had long, unbound black hair. The other eleven supreme Daolords were clearly following him.

“Darknorth?” When the violet-robed devil saw Ning, he smiled a cold smile. “What a coincidence. We actually ran into Daolord Darknorth.”

“King Paleos?” Ning was surprised. After entering the Waveshift Realm, he had never heard anything that indicated King Paleos was a particularly powerful Daolord. King Paleos was a member of the Aeonian race! He was very low-key, and everyone in the outside world believed him to merely be a second-tier Daolord. The most famous Daolord of the Aeonian race had been King Gorsch... but now, it seemed, King Paleos was also quite powerful.

Boom! Rainbow light swirled around the air above them, forming into the towering figure of a white-robed man.

“All surviving Daolords have reached the third world. Let me explain... the third world has a total of three passageways! Every single Daolord is only permitted to challenge a single passageway. Originally, each passageway held three command talismans within them, with the total value in each being roughly the same! But of course, only five command talismans remain.” Realmsoul Polo’s voice echoed throughout the world.

As the realmsoul was speaking, Ning received certain news from the Brightshore Kingdom. “What?!” Ning was shocked. The Dao Alliance had issued a new Daolord ranking!

In recent years, the Daolord rankings had changed to a shocking degree.

“Daolord Dreamlore ranks number three?”

“King Paleos ranks number six?”

“Daolord Skyaxe died?”

“King Cliffbank died?”

Ning was completely stunned when he saw the new rankings. A total of six supreme Daolords had died in the fight over the final Voidsea Jadeseal, and the Daolord rankings had completely changed. The first was Winesage, the second was Darknorth, the third was Dreamlore, the fourth was Palace Lord Dawnstar, the fifth was the Radiant King, the sixth was King Paleos, the seventh was Daolord Owlblack, the eighth was Ninestone, the ninth was Daolord Skyshatter, and the tenth was Daolord Tigrone...

A brand new group of supreme Daolords had arisen! Many had been very low-key in the past and not very well known, but in the fight over the Voidsea Jadeseal they had revealed their fierceness.

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King Paleos' violet eyes were focused on Ning. He said coldly, “Only five of the nine command talismans remain. You, Darknorth, should've acquired three of them. Your ally, the Ninedust Sectlord, seems to have acquired one as well... but the twelve of us haven't acquired so much as a single one, nor have we acquired any Voidsea Jadeseals. Daolord Darknorth, don't you think this is a bit unfair?”

“Daolord Darknorth.” Fiendqueen Dustrain was behind King Paleos, and she spoke out in a similarly cold voice, “We don't ask for much. We can forget about the other two talismans, nor will we force the Ninedust Sectlord to hand over his. The ninth command talisman, however... you must hand it to us! Hand us the ninth command talisman and we won't cause you any trouble.”

“Hand over the ninth command talisman.”

“Hand it over, Daolord Darknorth.”

“Not even Winesage is a match for us. Darknorth, you should go ahead and hand it over.”

King Paleos and the other supreme Daolords all stared at Ning. They were all supreme Daolords. If they were in a smaller group of just four or five, they might be very nervous when facing Ning, but there were twelve

of them right now; they wouldn't be afraid of even Winesage! In fact, they had already battled against Winesage earlier. Why would they fear Daolord Darknorth?

Thus far, the twelve of them had acquired nothing at all. If they were able to harvest the fruits of the ninth command talisman, they would be able to split the harvest and trade for some rare materials from the various Hegemons or the Dao Alliance. In that way, at least, their visit to the Waveshift Realm wouldn't have been in vain.

Ning frowned. The command talismans represented the fruits of the Crimsonwave Temple, so valuable that the Dao Alliance and the Hegemons were going crazy over them. The ninth command talisman was the most valuable and an absolutely priceless item. Ning was planning on using them to rescue Yu Wei!

Clang! Clang! Clang! Ning's body blurred as he manifested three heads and six arms. Six streaks of golden light immediately shot out from his back and landed in his hands.

The three-headed, six-armed, white-robed youth stared coldly at the supreme Daolords, six Northbow swords at the ready. "Cut the crap, you pack of fools. Come and die!"

Chapter 17: Furious Battle

“Quite bold. Daolord Skyaxe was similarly bold when facing me... but in the end, I killed him. A pity. I haven’t had the chance to battle against the Radiant King or Dawnstar yet. If I had, I wouldn’t be ranked merely number six. Come and show me how strong you are, oh mighty second-ranked Darknorth.” King Paleos manifested six arms as well, each arm wielding a strange sawtoothed weapon.

“Surround him and kill him,” Fiendqueen Dustrain barked coldly.

“Darknorth doesn’t have an invulnerable form; it’ll be much easier to kill him.”

“Since he’s courting death, let us give it to him. Once we kill him, we’ll be able to take all of his command talismans.” The supreme Daolords were all boiling with the desire to kill.

Ning’s face tightened as a fierce light shone from his eyes. He glared at King Paleos and said coldly, “So you were the one to kill Daolord Skyaxe?”

“Yes. Otherwise, how would I be ranked at number six?” King Paleos asked.

“Damn you.” Ning was infuriated. There were very few supreme Daolords he was friends with, but Daolord Skyaxe was one of them. When he had been weak and besieged by Daolord Shaka outside Skywood City, one of the eight Sacred Cities of the Dao Alliance, he had begged the Brightshore Kingdom for aid. Palace Lord Soleman and Daolord Skyaxe had immediately come to his aid, and as a result Ning had become friends with both of them.

Although the relationship naturally wasn’t nearly as deep as the one he shared with Ninedust, who he had shared life-and-death experiences with, they were still good friends.

“Afraid?” King Paleos smirked.

“DIE!” Ning was boiling with murderous rage.

BOOM! A terrifying wave of invisible force instantly lashed out towards

them from Ning, striking against the souls and truesouls of the twelve supreme Daolords.

“Ah!” “Ahhh!” Two of the supreme Daolords instantly turned pale, followed by their heads drooping downwards. The faces of many of the other Daolords also tightened slightly, but at least they were able to maintain their clarity of mind.

“What a terrifying heartforce art.” King Paleos’ face tightened as well.

“Kill!” Just now, Ning had used the [Heartforce Eradicator] art. It was linked to his Omega Sword Dao, and so now that Ning had reached the third stage of his Omega Sword Dao the power of his [Heartforce Eradicator] had also significantly improved. However, to directly slay a supreme Daolord was still no easy feat.

And yet, Ning’s goal wasn’t to actually slay any of them outright. His goal was to crush their morale and douse their bravado.

Boom! Next, his vast heartworld projection came crashing down. At the center of that massive, illusory world was that enormous sword-shaped mountain, and it came plunging straight down towards all of the supreme Daolords, causing their bodies to stiffen. As far as heartworld projections went, at present there was no Daolord who was a match for Ning!

A heartbeat later, nine energy dragons came howling out of Ning’s body, forming the Yin-Yang Chaos Domain around him.

“One person wants to suppress the twelve of us by himself? He’s too arrogant.”

“He doesn’t know his own limits.”

“Break!”

King Paleos and the others used their own secret arts as well. Some were strong, some were weak, but when joined together they vastly outstripped Ning in power. The difference was, Ning’s heartworld projection and his secret arts were able to merge together seamlessly! These supreme Daolords weren’t able to merge their secret arts together; if they tried, they would begin to interfere with each other.

However, they had gained some experience from their previous battle against Winesage. There were some secret arts that could work together, such as Five Elements arts or Yin and Yang arts. In this way, their secret arts could be improved in power as they worked together to suppress Ning.

However, Ning's heartworld projection was also capable of restricting and suppressing part of the secret arts. The two sides began a battle of secret arts and heartworld projections. Ning was forced to shrink the radius of his secret arts, but he was still able to hold.

"Kill!" Six Northbow swords in hand, Ning charged straight towards the strongest foe, King Paleos. King Paleos might be strong, but Ning held him in no regard at all. Ning would dare to battle even Winesage in solo combat; why would he fear King Paleos?

"He didn't pick the weakest member but instead went after me?" King Paleos' long black hair fluttered behind him as he sent his six serrated blades howling towards Ning. As he did, a thick black fog spread out from him.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Six streaks of mist-formed swords appeared before him with incredible speed, so fast that King Paleos' face instantly turned pale. "How can he be this fast? He's even faster than the Radiant King. In fact, perhaps only Daolord Dreamlore is a match for him in speed!" He had yet to truly battle against the Radiant King or Daolord Dreamlore, but during the previous fights over the Voidsea Jadeseals he had watched both of them strike with despair-inducing speed.

Darknorth's swords were just as fast... no, they were even faster than the Radiant King's strikes! Perhaps only Daolord Dreamlore and his dazzling, blood-streaked bloodblade strikes were on par with Darknorth.

Clang! Clang! Clang! King Paleos furiously defended himself against Ning's onslaught. His six serrated blades were quite strange and unpredictable. When used for defense, they were quite formidable.

"What?!" King Paleos could sense that every single one of his blades

were enduring a terrifying amount of power with each strike. His fingers were turning numb and his body was trembling.

Fast and furious!

The Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop was the fastest and most penetrating attack Ning had to muster. But of course, in raw power alone it wasn't even close to the Heavenbreaker in might. Although the Northbow swords boosted the Blood Drop stance the most, this stance was still weaker than the Heavenbreaker stance. Despite that, it still contained quite a bit of power! This was especially true after Ning had mastered the tenth stance of the [Heartsword], as this allowed Ning to infuse every single strike with incredible weight.

King Paleos felt as though every single strike brought him incredible pressure. If it was just a matter of speed, he would have a solution. If it was just a matter of power, he would also have a solution! The problem was, Ji Ning's swords not only surpassed the Radiant King in speed, they actually surpassed King Paleos' ultimate attacks in power as well!

"How is this possible? How could he be this much stronger than me? Impossible... I've reached a perfect level of power. I'm not a match for Winesage, but that's because Winesage has a Universe treasure. None of the other supreme Daolords could dominate me like this!" King Paleos couldn't believe it, nor did he want to believe it. He had always been very proud of himself and had been very dissatisfied with his ranking as the sixth Daolord. As he saw it, any Daolord who didn't have a Universe treasure would only be on par with him at most.

Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash! Ning's swords were simply too fast! Mist-formed swords flew everywhere, creating an almost illusory dreamscape.

For the sake of destroying the 9000 barriers as quickly as possible, Ning had grown accustomed to launching a furious barrage of attacks. Now that he was boiling with the desire to murder the man before him, he was able to strike 129 times with unmatched speed. King Paleos' defenses were quite impressive and he used all six serrated blades to defend at the same time... but perpetual defense would result in defeat. In the end, one

strike from Ning slipped past his guard.

Slash! A streak of sword-light stabbed straight into King Paleos' body, but King Paleos transformed into a blood-tinged black fog.

"An invulnerable form?" Ning frowned. Dealing with cultivators who had invulnerable forms was quite taxing. Ninedust was an example of someone who had an invulnerable aquaform.

"Attack together and kill him!" With the billowing black fog, streams of bloody light reformed to manifest into King Paleos. He bellowed loudly, "Daolords, no one can beat him in a one-on-one fight. Join forces to kill him!"

"Surround him and kill him!"

"Don't get greedy."

"Careful!"

King Paleos had been defeated in a single exchange by that furious barrage of sword-mist and had only survived thanks to his invulnerable form. This instantly frightened all of the other supreme Daolords. This Darknorth was simply too terrifying! For him to be able to fight against four supreme Daolords and kill both Timedream and Kingfreak was one thing, but King Paleos was far stronger than the Kingfreak or Timedream in close combat. Despite that, he had also been defeated in a single exchange?!

What they didn't realize was that Ning had mastered the tenth stance of the [Heartsword] in Crimsonwave Temple. If it hadn't been for this technique, he still would've been able to beat King Paleos but he wouldn't have been able to do it just through a simple barrage of Blood Drop stance strikes.

"Careful?" Ning swept them with his gaze. "It doesn't matter how careful you are."

Whoosh. Ning vanished without a trace.

"That's his assassination arts! Careful, he can appear anywhere!"

“Be careful, everyone.”

“Attack! Attack! Don’t let him get close to us!”

The supreme Daolords began to blindly launch attacks in every direction. Ning’s heartworld projection and nine novessence arts ensured that so long as he remained within their range, there would be no way for his enemies to find him once he used his assassination arts.

Whoosh. Ning appeared out of nowhere, then struck at the supreme Daolord closest to him.

“Block, quick!”

“Join forces!”

Some used magic treasures, others used secret arts. All of them threw attacks towards Ning as quickly as possible.

Boom! Slash! Ning’s six Northbow swords executed varying sword-arts as he blocked the attacks and continued his charge. His defensive abilities were far stronger than King Paleos’.

“Dodge, quick!”

“Dodge!”

The supreme Daolords were so terrified that they frantically retreated, moving closer to their peers. Only when five of them worked in unison would they be able to resist Ning.

“He’s utterly terrifying.”

“Darknorth’s sword-arts are completely flawless. He’s able to easily defend himself against our combined attacks while continuing to charge at us!” This was the first time these Daolords experienced the terror of Ning for themselves.

Ning was already incredibly strong to begin with. Now that he had the Northbow swords and the tenth stance of the [Heartsword], Ning’s advantage over the other supreme Daolords had only grown. Winesage was able to dominate the other supreme Daolords, and so too was Ji Ning. The difference was, Ning’s ‘Shadowless’ evasion art was so unpredictable

and mysterious that the other supreme Daolords were terrified of it and him.

Chapter 18: One Man Army

“What?” King Paleos, Fiendqueen Dustrain, and the others were all shocked. Things were turning out completely contrary to what they had expected. Not even Winesage had put them in such dire straits! Although Winesage was able to crush any supreme Daolord in a head-on fight, when the twelve of them worked together they were able to dominate him. Faced with their combined attacks, even Winesage was in rather bad shape.

But Daolord Darknorth was actually beating them silly? Was Darknorth even more powerful than Winesage?

What they didn't realize was that Ji Ning was indeed better than Winesage in dealing with group attacks! Ning's sword-arts were more perfect and flawless, allowing him a truly airtight defense against mass attacks! His Shadowless sword-arts allowed him to vanish without a trace, making it so that his enemies couldn't focus their fire against him while he was able to launch counter-attacks as he pleased.

All of these factors combined to ensure that at any given moment, no more than five supreme Daolords were able to fight against Ning! This was why Ning had the advantage and held the initiative. These supreme Daolords were all so frightened that they began to cluster closer to each other, no longer daring to launch attacks.

“Darknorth, let's call it off,” King Paleos roared mentally.

“Call it off?” Ning rebutted coldly, “Acceptable, but you need to get the fuck out of this passageway.” Ning knew that not even Winesage would be able to kill these twelve Daolords now that they were working together, much less himself.

“By what right are you denying us entry to this passageway? You can already harvest the fruit you need; this passageway is meaningless to you. If we want to force our way in, you won't be able to stop us!” King Paleos said furiously.

“Hmph.” Ning came to a halt as well. He just stood there, the area

around him covered by his heartworld projection as the nine energy dragons coiled around him in accordance with his Yin-Yang sword-intent. “I cannot enter this passageway, true, but if you wish to enter it you must first master the [Vitalis] art... and so long as I am here, you can forget about quietly meditating on it and mastering it.”

“King Paleos, Darknorth is telling the truth. The rhomboid stone pillar does indeed say that one has to master the [Vitalis] art and learn how to disguise one’s truesoul aura before one can safely pass through those seven-colored chains.”

“Darknorth isn’t going to let us train in peace.”

“Damn.” The twelve supreme Daolords all felt resigned. Ning wasn’t able to kill them, but he was entirely capable of disrupting them while they attempted to train, making it impossible for them to master this technique.

“Let’s go.” King Paleos gritted his teeth. He had no choice but to retreat.

“Go.” Although the other supreme Daolords felt insulted and humiliated, they all ended up retreating. In truth, these Daolords were all ranked towards the bottom of the first-tier, which was why they agreed to fight under King Paleos’ banner in a group of twelve. In the past, Fiendqueen Dustrain might’ve ranked in the top ten... but now? So many powerful, low-key supreme Daolords had emerged that she had long ago been shoved out of the top ten.

“Hmph.” Ning watched as the supreme Daolords flew away, then dispelled his heartworld projection and his secret arts. He continued to silently stand guard over this region.

He had to help Ninedust... or to be precise, he had to help himself. Ninedust had said early on that he would give Ning all of the command talismans he acquired! Thus, Ning naturally had to do his best to prevent any of the other Daolords from entering this passageway.

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“Darknorth has reached an incredible level of power. He and Winesage

have clearly surpassed the rest of us by a tremendous amount.” King Paleos’ group of supreme Daolords quickly arrived at a new passageway. This was the passageway which Ning had already traversed.

“Are we going to give up, just like that?” Fiendqueen Dustrain sent mentally. She was the second-in-command of this squad.

“Hmph...” King Paleos let out a cold snort. His eyes suddenly lit up when he stared at the rhomboid stone pillar. “The [Vitalis] art.”

Fiendqueen glanced at it as well, then shook her head. “The command talismans in this passageway have already been taken. It must have been Darknorth who did it.”

“Doesn’t matter. The [Vitalis] art can be learned here.” King Paleos pointed at the rhomboid pillar. “Let’s memorize the technique then begin to train! Once we master it, we’ll head to the passageway the Ninedust Sectlord took. So long as we can make it past the rainbow chains, Darknorth won’t be able to attack us.”

“Right.”

“King Paleos speaks the truth.”

All of them agreed with this plan. They could learn the technique but decline to actually enter the passageway. Later on, they could choose to challenge the Ninedust Sectlord’s passageway or perhaps a different one.

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Three passageways. More than thirty supreme Daolords.

Because Ning’s original passageway had already been cleaned out, everyone’s attention turned towards the other two passageways.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Four figures came flying over.

On the stone island, Ning raised his head to look at them. His eyes narrowed. The new arrivals were Daolord Dreamlore, Daolord Tigrone, Daolord Skyshatter, and Daolord Owlblack.

“The four of them?” Ning didn’t dare to feel the slightest bit of arrogance. All four of them were ranked in the top ten, and the current top

ten was much stronger than the previous top ten. Many Daolords who had been previously low-key had emerged, and every single one was difficult to deal with.

Dreamlore was ranked number three and was second only to Ning himself. Both Dawnstar and the Radiant King had been defeated by him, a testament to his power.

“You wish to stop us and to assist your good friend Ninedust?” Daolord Dreamlore smirked as he glanced at Ning. “Darknorth, you’ve already helped him acquire a Voidsea Jadeseal; are you going to help him again? What a selfless man you are.”

“I’m actually helping myself,” Ning said calmly.

“What, you actually plan on stopping the four of us?” the heavily-armored and muscular Daolord Tigrone spoke in a deep, rumbling voice.

“Heh heh heh...” Daolord Owlblack laughed, his voice grating and piercing to the ear. “He really doesn’t know his own limits.”

“There’s one of me and four of you... but you still won’t be able to do anything to me,” Ning said icily.

Dreamlore and the others frowned. The four of them could suppress even Winesage in a frontal attack, but they had to admit that if Ning wished to hide they wouldn’t even be able to track him down. He had a heartworld projection, his nine novessence arts, and even that assassination art.

“So long as I am here, there’s no way you’ll be able to train in the [Vitalis] art in peace,” Ning said. “Leave. Go somewhere else.”

“Nice one,” Daolord Owlblack smiled coldly.

“That’s a nasty move.” Daolord Skyshatter ground his teeth.

There really was nothing the four of them could do. Cultivation required silence and focus; if Ning was causing trouble for them, how could they possibly train?

“Darknorth, there are only three passageways in total. You’ve already

cleaned out one of them, so there really are only two left. The other is current being challenged by Winesage, Dawnstar, Ninestone, and Cloudwalker, and the others. The other Daolords probably won't be able to catch up to them and so many of them will come here instead. They'll master the [Vitalis] art and then charge through in mass. I want to see how many of them you can stop!" Daolord Dreamlore said coldly, "We're leaving now."

The four of them smiled coldly as they flew away.

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Ning knew that a 'one man army' like himself wouldn't be able to hold everyone off forever. However, every moment he held them off for was an extra moment for Ninedust. Ninedust was helping him out, after all; the more command talismans he acquired, the more fruit he would be able to harvest and the better his chances of reviving his wife were.

"Hmph." Ning radiated an eager desire to do battle.

Time continued to flow on, with Ning standing a silent guard. As for the Ninedust Sectlord, he was still stuck on the [Daoheart] technique. More than a month went by.

Whoooosh. An awe-inspiring group of figures flew over from afar.

Ning raised his head, his face tightening. The arrivals were Daolord Dreamlore's group of four and King Paleos' group of twelve.

"Kill!"

"Charge onto the seven-colored chains!"

The sixteen supreme Daolords charged forwards, executing their secret arts and sending out a flood of magic items to attack. Ning's face had turned solemn long ago, and he hurriedly used his heartworld projection and his nine novessence arts to attack while using his Shadowless evasion art to vanish without a trace. In the face of such a gathering of power, he didn't dare to fight head-on.

"Tigrone, Skyshatter, the two of you stand guard for now while the two

of us charge through the chains. As agreed, the four of us will evenly split any fruit we acquire,” Daolord Dreamlore sent mentally. He knew very well that he himself wouldn’t be able to keep a command talisman safe by himself. The four of them would have to continue to work together.

“Agreed.” Daolord Tigrone and Daolord Skyshatter both nodded as Owlblack and Dreamlore both charged towards the seven-colored chains.

“Stop right there!” Ning’s heartworld projection and nine novessence arts were compressed to a smaller region, serving as a ‘bottleneck’ in front of the seven-colored chains. If anyone wished to cross through the chains, they would have to first cross this region.

Ning revealed himself, six Northbow swords at the ready within the ‘bottleneck’.

“You wish to block all of us?” Dreamlore smiled coldly. “King Paleos!”

“Attack!”

“Let’s attack!” King Paleos’ led six of his supreme Daolords to press the assault as well. It had only been a month or so, after all. Even though they had temporal acceleration treasures, only some of them had mastered the [Vitalis] art.

“You won’t be able to stop us.” King Paleos led the six supreme Daolords, joining Daolord Dreamlore and Daolord Owlblack as they charged towards Ning.

Chapter 19: Triage

King Paleos, Fiendqueen Dustrain, Daolord Owlblack, and Daolord Dreamlore led the group of nine supreme Daolords in charging straight towards Ji Ning.

One against nine? Not even Winesage would be able to pull that off, to say nothing of Ji Ning. Not only that, even the other supreme Daolords hanging back such as Daolord Tigrone and Daolord Skyshatter were charging towards Ning, seeking to tie him down.

“He won’t be able to stop us.”

“Nobody can stop this many Daolords.”

“Haha, we’re going to make it through.” The supreme Daolords were filled with confidence.

The three-headed, six-armed Ning stood there by himself at the beginning of the seven-colored chains. His six Northbow swords were at the ready, while the nine novessence arts and the heartworld projection covered the surrounding area. He just watched calmly as the host of supreme Daolords charged towards him.

Whoosh! Ning suddenly vanished without a trace.

“Careful, don’t let him ambush you. His assassination art is extremely unpredictable.”

“Be careful.”

They all began to wildly blast the entire area while sending their own secret arts and heartworld projections to contend with Ning’s head-on. As they did so, they continued their charge.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

“We made it!”

“I made it as well.” One supreme Daolord after another landed on the seven-colored chains. As soon as they did so, they were able to sense an invisible force wrap around them that protected them from the battle

raging just outside. No combat was possible on the chains.

“Let’s go!” King Paleos charged forwards as well. Clang! Suddenly, a black hole appeared directly in front of him. A moment later, he was blasted backwards with a huge booming sound.

Clang! Daolord Owlblack fought in a barehanded style and was extremely strong in close combat, but just like Paleos he was blasted backwards with an explosion.

“Careful! That’s Darknorth!” King Paleos and Daolord Owlback were both furious.

Ning had to briefly reveal himself while attacking, and he swept the group with a cold gaze. A heartbeat later, he vanished once more. It was very difficult for Ning to kill them, but his defensive sword-arts were so superlative and the [Heartsword] technique so formidable that it was very easy for him to stop them in their tracks and knock them flying, one after the other.

“I refuse to believe it.” Daolord Dreamlore’s youthful face had a look of cold malice on it as he struck out with his massive two-handed bloodblade.

“Fuck off.” Whoosh! An incomparably dazzling streak of bloody light suddenly appeared. It was like a scene of peerless beauty that would cause those who saw it to be intoxicated by it. Even Daolord Dreamlore himself was completely absorbed and entranced when he executed this attack. This ‘bloodblade’ was a very mysterious and unique weapon. He had been entranced by it, and his Dao was able to truly and fully merge with it.

“Fast! Even faster than me!” Ning was shocked. His swords were incredibly fast, but when he saw that dazzlingly beautiful streak of bloody light he knew that his attacks were still significantly slower in comparison.

Ning’s six Northbow swords struck out in unison. Ning had been able to use merely a single sword to knock Daolord Paleos, Daolord Owlblack, and Fiendqueen Dustrain back, but he didn’t dare to be the slightest bit overconfident against Daolord Dreamlore’s dazzling strike.

Six streams of mist-formed swords struck out, each of them moving faster than a hundred times the speed of light.

Clang! Clang! Clang! In the end, he had an advantage in that he only needed to focus on defense. Although the Radiant King and Palace Lord Dawnstar had been defeated by Daolord Dreamlore, they were still able to preserve their lives. In comparison, Ning's close combat abilities could be described as truly perfect and flawless!

Although he was using the Omega Sword Dao – Blood Drop, in the instant that his sword-light collided it transformed into the Omega Sword Dao – Soleheart. After truly developing the Omega Sword Dao, Ning's offensive techniques could transform into defensive techniques, and vice versa. All techniques could be instantly converted into different techniques without even the slightest trace or opening.

Boom! Daolord Dreamlore only felt an enormous shockwave sweep past his body, sending him stumbling backwards. A look of shock appeared on his face. This was the first time that his attack had been crushed head-on!

Although Dawnstar and the Radiant King had been able to survive his assault, they had been left in very bad shape. Even if Winesage was to face off against this attack of his, Winesage would be forced to simply defend, given that Winesage was just too slow. Darknorth, however, was able to crush him!

"Impossible. Impossible!" A berserk look appeared within Daolord Dreamlore's eyes. "Again!" He was filled with the utmost devotion and sincerity towards his bloodblade.

Swoosh! Yet another dazzling streak of bloody light filled the skies.

"Hmph." Ning's six streaks of mist-formed sword energy once more appeared as well. They were like the spokes to a giant wheel, and when they stabbed out they quickly began to swivel together to form a massive black hole that smashed directly against bloody streak of light, destroying it and knocking Daolord Dreamlore flying backwards.

"Daolord Dreamlore, you might be faster than me... but you only have a single bloodblade. If you had six, I'd probably find it much tougher to deal

with you.” Ning’s voice rang out.

His sword wasn’t as fast as Daolord Dreamlore’s, but at least he was closer to Dreamlore’s speed than any other Daolord. The difference wasn’t as great as it was for the likes of Winesage and Dawnstar! Given that he was able to defend with all six Northbow swords at the same time while using incredibly tough defensive sword-arts, he was naturally able to endure the blow and knock his opponent backwards.

“Damn that Darknorth.” The nearby King Paleos, Daolord Owlblack, and Fiendqueen Dustrain all began to grow anxious. Dreamlore was knocked flying back, an ugly look on his face. After he had defeated the Radiant King and Dawnstar, he had felt extremely confident in being able to challenge the second-ranked Daolord Darknorth... but reality had just slapped him in the face! He could sense the enormous disparity in power between the two of them.

What he didn’t know was that ever since Ning had mastered the tenth stance of the [Heartsword] art, Ning had already closed the gap between himself and Winesage! This meant there was now a huge gap in power between Ning and all other supreme Daolords which was only worsened by how balanced and flawless Ning’s sword-arts were!

“What should I do?”

“The other Daolords have already made it across. The only ones left here are us.”

“Damn that Darknorth. He’s quite crafty.”

Dreamlore, King Paleos, Owlblack, and Fiendqueen Dustrain were all frantic with impatience. Nine of them had started this charge, and Ning truly wasn’t able to stop all of them at once... but he was more than capable of tying down four of them.

Whoosh. Ning once more reappeared in front of the seven-colored chains. “You shall not pass.” Ning looked at the four of them.

“What should we do? When we attack, Darknorth just hides and ignores us.” Tigrone, Skyshatter, and the others who were holding back and

planning to cross the chains began to grow anxious as well.

Ning completely ignored them. His attention was focused on the four.

Ning knew that it was fairly hard to master the [Daoheart] technique. As for defeating the 9000 barriers? Those weaker first-tier Daolords wouldn't pose Ninedust any risk at all.

.....

At this very moment, Ninedust was within the floating stone island in front of the second abyss. He was training in the [Daoheart] technique with his temporal acceleration cottage. He had failed time and time again, and thus he knew exactly what was going on outside thanks to those moments of clarity. "I need to speed up. Darknorth is buying me as much time as he can. I need to speed it up!"

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Five supreme Daolords appeared before him.

"Ninedust, hand over the Voidsea Jadeseal!"

"Hand it over, Ninedust!"

The five supreme Daolords immediately surrounded and attacked Ninedust. To them, the Voidsea Jadeseal was what truly mattered. The command talismans might technically be more valuable, but they were only of use to Eternal Emperors. No amount of treasures the Eternal Emperors might give them would make any difference if they weren't able to complete the Daomerge! To them, all nine command talismans weren't as valuable as a single one of those Voidsea Jadeseals.

Whoosh. The temporal acceleration cottage vanished, while Ninedust transformed into an endless sea of water that filled the surrounding area. Part of the sea coalesced into a humanoid figure that spoke out: "I, Ninedust, swear on my very life itself that I have already used up the Voidsea Jadeseal I acquired. If I violate or betray this oath, may my soul and truesoul be shattered and dispersed."

His booming voice filled the entire world around them.

“Uh?”

“But...”

The five supreme Daolords who had been permitted by Ning to enter this island were all stunned. Even Daolord Dreamlore and the others on the first island were all stunned.

He already used it up? One of the main reasons why they had so frantically attempted to make it onto the second island was because they wanted to take Ninedust’s Voidsea Jade seal from him! This was what truly drew their attention.

None of them wanted to believe it, but Ninedust had already sworn a lifeblood oath. That meant this was definitely true.

“Damnit.”

“He actually used it.”

“Just what I was afraid of...”

“He must’ve used it up when we were busy fighting over the final Voidsea Jade seal in the second world...”

“Sly bastard.” All of them felt resentment and regret. Still, all that resentment was of no use. Since Ninedust had already used it up, they didn’t want to waste any more time on him. He had an invulnerable aquaform, after all; he wouldn’t be easily defeated.

“This [Daoheart] technique... it’s absolutely marvelous. Absolutely inconceivable!”

“The [Daoheart] technique?” After a brief moment of disappointment, the five supreme Daolords turned their attention to the [Daoheart] technique. All of them were stunned and wildly delighted, and they quickly began to memorize and train in the technique. Techniques which could be used to strengthen the Daoheart were truly priceless. This technique alone made their visit to Crimsonwave Temple worth it.

Chapter 20: The Final Command

Talisman

“What’s a [Daoheart] technique?” King Paleos called out loudly.

“A technique that can be used to enhance the Daoheart,” one of the five supreme Daolords immediately shouted back.

King Paleos, Daolord Dreamlore, and the others instantly grew excited.

“Gentlemen, if you are willing to choose a different passageway I’d be willing to transmit the [Daoheart] technique do you,” Ning said.

“No need. They’ve already sworn lifeblood oaths to share any and all techniques we find,” Daolord Tigrone said in a gravelly voice. The reason why he was willing to forgo charging into the passageway was precisely because the others had all sworn lifeblood oaths to share any techniques they found as well as to split any fruit they acquired.

“Oh?” Ning said calmly, “It doesn’t matter. The four of you can forget about making it across.”

Ning’s defensive prowess was such that not a single attack had landed on him yet. In truth, even if he had been hit his Hegemon armor would’ve been able to absorb the blow. Tying down four supreme Daolords was entirely within Ning’s capabilities.

“The four of us won’t be able to make it across,” King Paleos sent mentally. “Tigrone, Skyshatter, the two of you need to train in the [Vitalis] art as soon as possible. Once you master it, you can join the four of us in our attempts. If all six of us work together, he probably won’t be able to stop us.”

“Alright.” The main reason why Tigrone, Skyshatter, and the rest didn’t join the attempt was because they hadn’t mastered [Vitalis]. Ning could simply ignore them and thus was able to easily focus his efforts on stopping just the other four.

For a time, the battlefield grew silent. Ning continued to stand there by

himself in front of the seven-colored chains, a single man who could stop even an army in its tracks.

Another five days went by.

“Hahaha...” Loud laughter rang out as the Ninedust Sectlord stepped onto the tri-colored chains and began to stride across them.

“Damn.” The faces of Daolord Dreamlore, King Paleos, and the others all turned pale.

“Excellent.” Ning revealed a delighted look.

Ninedust walked across the tri-colored chains. Although the level of pain increased as he continued to advance, he was still able to endure it and make it across to the altar, where he acquired the sixth command talisman at its base.

“Haha, Darknorth, it took me forever to master the ‘Daoheart’ challenge. I really feel a bit embarrassed.” Ninedust turned to stare at Ning, calling out to him.

“Stop wasting time and words. Hurry up and crack the altar open! Remember, use a temporal acceleration treasure! This challenge is the hardest of all,” Ning called out loudly.

“Got it!” Ninedust responded.

.....

Although King Paleos and the others were very anxious, there was nothing they could do. Ning had focused on the four of them with laser-like precision. Given that the heartworld projection and the nine novessence arts were all aimed at them, there really was no way for them to get across.

Another half month went past. Finally, Tigrone and Skyshatter both mastered the [Vitalis] art as well.

“Let’s go together.”

“I want to see how he’ll stop this many of us!”

Dreamlore, King Paleos, Owlblack, Dustrain, Tigrone, and Skyshatter joined forces to charge towards the seven-colored chains.

“Huh? What’s going on?” Daolord Tigrone found out that... nothing happened at all. No one impeded him as he charged onto the seven-colored chains.

“Eh? I made it?” Fiendqueen Dustrain was stunned as well.

The two hurriedly crossed the seven-colored chains. However, Dreamlore, King Paleos, Daolord Owlblack, and Skyshatter were all stopped by Ning.

“The four of you aren’t allowed to cross.” Ning’s voice rang out. He had specifically decided on which Daolords he could let across. In the end, he just wasn’t strong enough and wouldn’t be able to block everyone, and thus he had to pick and choose who he would and would not let cross.

The five he had initially let onto the seven-colored chains were all supreme Daolords who ranked at the back of the line. They posed no threat at all.

As for Fiendqueen Dustrain? When Ninedust had first arrived at the Waveshift Realm, he had already been on par with her! However, back then Ninedust had only recently become a Daolord of the Fourth Step and hadn’t come up with any ultimate attacks for himself yet. Thanks to the legacy of the Ancient Hegemon as well as his experiences in Crimsonwave Temple, he had already come up with a total of three killer attacks and had definitely surpassed Fiendqueen Dustrain in power.

It must be remembered that breaking through the 9000 barriers was all about attack power! Ninedust’s attack power was definitely above Fiendqueen Dustrain’s, and so she wouldn’t prove to be much of a threat. As a result, Ning let her across.

As for Daolord Tigrone? His defensive prowess was truly unrivalled, but his attacks were much weaker. He also wouldn’t be much of a threat.

But Dreamlore, Owlblack, Skyshatter, and Paleos were the four most dangerous Daolords present. Ning naturally would have to stop them!

“You fight dirty, Darknorth.”

“Daolord Tigrone and Fiendqueen Dustrain, do your best to acquire that command talisman. If you can kill Ninedust, all the better.”

“It’ll be up to the two of you.”

Dreamlore and the others had to give up, even though they didn’t wish to.

“Let’s go find the Radiant King, Daolord Feich, and the others. The final Voidsea Jadeseal is on Daolord Feich,” Daolord Dreamlore ordered. He immediately led Owlblack, Skyshatter, and King Paleos as well as the other Daolords in leaving. These nine supreme Daolords began to charge towards the other passageway in search of Daolord Feich.

.....

Everything fell silent.

Dustrain, Tigrone, and the rest of the supreme Daolords were all focused on the [Daoheart] technique. As for Ninedust, he had already reached the altar. He first used the temporal acceleration treasure to cover the entire thing, then began to assault the 9000 barriers.

“No one’s coming?” Ning’s life was now quite relaxed. “Maybe I should go take a look and see how the other passageway is doing.” Ning flew towards the direction of Winesage’s passageway. When he reached the edges of the passageway, he stared at the distant islands.

“Wow!” Ning was stupefied by what he saw.

The situation in this passageway was far more chaotic. Winesage, Dawnstar, Cloudwalker, and Ninestone were at the peak of the altar, working together to assault the 9000 barriers while also assaulting each other.

As for the situation on the levitating stone island in front of the second abyss? It was even more chaotic! The Radiant King, Daolord Snowjoy, Daolord Shaka, the Starking, Daolord Feich, and a number of other supreme Daolords were battling each other, with Daolord Snowjoy and

Daolord Shaka working together but being surrounded and assaulted by the other five.

“Daolord Feich!” A furious shout rang out, followed by King Paleos, Daolord Dreamlore, Daolord Owlblack, and Daolord Skyshatter arriving. They easily traversed the seven-colored chains and joined the wild melee.

“Damn.” The faces of the Radiant King and the others turned pale.

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It really was a wild, chaotic battle. The wild battle at the top of the altar was over the third command seal in that passageway, while the wild battle in front of the second abyss was over the Voidsea Jade seal.

The only peaceful place was at the outermost region, where the supreme Daolords were all trying to calmly train in the [Daoheart] technique and thus couldn't be bothered to fight with each other.

“This passageway really is quite chaotic.” Ning stood at the intersection between the two regions, keeping a watch on both sides. He couldn't be bothered to take part in the battle, as once he did everyone would be wary of him. In fact, they might gang up on him!

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Time flowed on. In the blink of an eye, another year went by. The wild battle continued, with two more supreme Daolords perishing. Both were fairly weak ones, and both died by Daolord Dreamlore's hands. His bloodblade was simply too vicious and cruel.

Boom! A sonorous explosion rang out as the 9000 barriers atop the altar simultaneously shattered. Ninestone howled with rage as he charged towards Winesage. Much like Tigrone, Ninestone possessed terrifying defensive abilities.

“Get it!” Cloudwalker and Dawnstar simultaneously charged forwards as well.

“Beat it.” Winesage was doing the same.

BOOM!

“Hahaha... brother Winesage, you’ve already acquired the other two command talismans in this passageway. You are being a bit too greedy, don’t you think?” Palace Lord Dawnstar was the one to seize it, delighting Cloudwalker, Ninestone, Snowjoy, and Shaka. The five of them were part of the same team; they had agreed long ago to split the fruits they acquired evenly!

“Damn.” Winesage frowned. He had been the first to arrive and had long ago mastered the [Vitalis] art and acquired the first command talisman. He had also been able to master the [Daoheart] technique with a single try, as the tempering process the Dark Kingdom subjected its Daolords to was utterly terrifying. Given that he was also a Heartforce Cultivator who had been alive for an extremely long period of time, his Daoheart was indeed superior to Ning’s. This was why he had been the one to acquire both of those talismans.

However, the 9000 barriers were simply too difficult to deal with.

Dawnstar, Cloudwalker, and Ninestone had quickly arrived at the altar as well. By then, Winesage had already shattered the first 8000 barriers... but alas, in the end it was Dawnstar who picked up the trophy.

“The eighth command seal has already fallen into the hands of Palace Lord Dawnstar.” The towering image of a white-robed man appeared above the chaotic battlefield, staring down at the Daolords as his voice echoed throughout the Crimsonwave Temple. “At present, only a single command talisman remains unclaimed, the seventh talisman. Daolords, this is the last one! If you miss it, you probably won’t have another chance like this.”

.....

When Ning heard the realmsoul’s voice, he hurriedly looked towards Ninedust’s passageway. Right now, Ninedust, Daolord Tigrone, and a little-known Daolord were simultaneously attacking the 9000 barriers together. Ning truly hadn’t expected that Daolord Tigrone and that fairly weak first-tier Daolord would both have such powerful Daohearts.

These command talismans mattered to Ning more than anything else

right now. He had already done everything he could for Ninedust. The rest would be up to him.

“Ninedust...” Ning watched anxiously. These fruits would be the basis for his negotiations with the major powers. The more he could acquire, the better.

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Thankfully, Winesage and the others didn’t take part in the fight over the final command talisman. In truth, there was no way for them to take part even if they wished to. Every single Daolord could only choose a single passageway, after all.

In their eyes, the Voidsea Jadeseal mattered the most!

“The Voidsea Jadeseal.”

“Quick.”

“Go for it!”

As if by silent agreement, Winesage, Dawnstar, Cloudwalker, and Ninestone all hurried onto the tri-colored chains and charged back to the flying stone island in front the second abyss, taking part in the wild battle.

Of the five Voidsea Jadeseals, one had been used up by Emperor Solesky, one had been used up by the Radiant King, and one had been used up by Ninedust. Only two remained untouched. One was in Winesage’s hands; everyone knew that there was no way to take it from him. The last one was in Daolord Feich’s hands.

“Go for it!”

“Kill him!”

The more chaotic a battle became, the more berserk the weaker Daolords grew. They knew that their only chances would be during wild battles like this. As supreme Daolords, they all had tough life-preserving abilities, ensuring that if they acquired the seal they would stand a good chance of keeping it.

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Time flowed on and the battle continued.

Daolord Feich was indeed good at staying alive. He was aided by the fact that some of the Daolords had long ago sworn oaths to join into true alliances together and help each other resist their foes, no matter who won the seal. Thus, even though another five supreme Daolords perished, Daolord Feich remained alive.

Boom!

The altar within Ninedust's passageway. By now, a total of four supreme Daolords were assaulting the 9000 barriers. Finally, with a loud explosion, the barriers came crashing down.

Whooooosh. A flood of water instantly swept towards the talisman.

"Ahahaha!" Ninedust roared with laughter, his voice echoing in the world around him. "Darknorth, I have it!"

When the distant Ning saw this, he was so excited that his aura flared mightily, causing energy waves to appear around him. He laughed loudly, "Haha, the heavens have chosen to aid me! The heavens have chosen to aid me!"

Chapter 21: Harvesting the Fruit

Given Ji Ning's personality, he generally wouldn't lose control of himself like this. The fact that he did was a testament to how excited he was. Ninedust had been competing against three other supreme Daolords; there was a very high chance that he would fail. Of course Ning was excited by his success!

"He was actually the one to obtain it?" Daolord Tigrone was so angry he gnashed his teeth.

"I was just about to stop him when he transformed into an endless wave." Fiendqueen Dustrain ground her teeth angrily as well. She had arrived at the altar at just the nick of time, but she still hadn't been able to intervene.

Whoosh. After acquiring the talisman, the Ninedust Sectlord transformed into a vast wave that surged out and reformed into human form atop the tri-colored chain. He endured the pain as he quickly walked across the tri-colored chains to the seven-colored chains where Ning was awaiting him.

"I didn't let you down, Darknorth. Haha! I, Ninedust, am quite capable," Ninedust said smugly. As he spoke, he handed the three command talismans he had in his position over to Ning. "Here, take'm." Ninedust was in an excellent mood right now. He had owed Ning a huge favor when the latter had let him take the Voidsea Jadeseal; given his arrogant temperament, he really felt rather uncomfortable owing Ning so much. Now that he was able to make some reparations, he immediately felt much better.

"Thank you." Ning immediately accepted all three talismans without being shy. They truly were quite important to him.

Whoosh. Rainbow light appeared in the skies above them, condensing into the towering and white-robed figure of Realmsoul Polo. The realmsoul stared down at them and boomed, "Daolords, the Voidsea Jadeseals and the command talismans needed for harvesting the fruit have

all been taken. If you wish to fight each other for them, feel free. Those who wish to harvest the fruit can take the command talismans to the corresponding Grovekeepers, who have already come. If you wish to leave, you can do so upon exiting the Crimsonwave Temple. I've already set up a spatial tunnel outside Crimsonwave Temple that lets you exit from the Waveshift Realm."

"We have to be careful. Let's go trade for the fruit right away," Ning said cautiously.

"Yes, let's go." Ninedust nodded.

.....

Ning's worry was that everyone else would fight him over his command talismans, as he had a total of six of them. However, his guess was wrong. Those weaker supreme Daolords were not capable of tying him down; they simply weren't powerful enough to take things from him. As for the stronger ones, all of them went to fight over the Voidsea Jadeseals.

"So even the final command talisman has been taken? I need to speed this up." Winesage frowned. A large number of Daolords had gathered atop the stony island before the second abyss, including the likes of Palace Lord Dawnstar, Palace Lord Cloudwalker, Ninestone, Snowjoy, Shaka, King Paleos, Daolord Skyshatter, Daolord Owlblack, Daolord Dreamlore, and even the Radiant King, who had returned to try his luck.

In short, a large group of the most elite Daolords in the Endless Territories had arrived.

Boom!

Winesage had been shoved to the sidelines. He was so powerful that no one else wanted to work with him, putting him in an awkward situation.

"This is the right moment!" Winesage suddenly produced an extremely ordinary-looking dart that was roughly half the size of his palm. The dart didn't seem unusual in any way; in fact, none of the battling Daolords sensed anything amiss at all.

Swish!

The dart suddenly shot out, bringing with it a terrifying aura of power that caused all of the many battling supreme Daolords to feel their hearts tremble.

“Not good.”

“Careful.”

“Dodge!” The subconscious terror they felt caused all of them to know that something bad was happening. By now, all of them saw the object which had inspired terror in them... that streak of dazzlingly fast light.

As soon as the dart had shot out, Winesage had shot out as well behind it.

“No!” Daolord Feich’s face turned ashen as he stared at the terrifying dart fly towards him. He almost instantly produced a round, glowing mirror in his hands. Crack! The surface of the mirror shattered, causing a much larger mirror to appear right in front of him.

Ever since he had acquired the Voidsea Jadeseal, he had been hunted by others. Although the Radiant King and the other Daolords in his group had all sworn lifeblood oaths to defend each other regardless of who acquired the seal, there was a limit to how hard they had to fight. As a result, Daolord Feich had encountered quite a few dangerous situations. This was his very last life-saving treasure.

Swish! The streak of light shot into the mirror. The mirror instantly cracked and then completely shattered into tiny pieces. The streak of light continued to shoot forwards, stabbing straight into Daolord Feich’s body.

Whoosh. Daolord Feich’s immediately transformed into a mass of gray mist.

“Ahhhhhhh! W-what the hell is this?!” An agonized scream rang out from the gray mist, followed by the mist reforming into a corpse. Daolord Feich’s corpse.

Winesage had been flying directly behind that streak of light. As soon as Daolord Feich’s corpse appeared, Winesage waved his hand and immediately collected it.

“Hmph. You should feel proud to have died to my ‘cycleseed dart’.” Winesage hadn’t really been willing to use this treasure, as it was the most powerful killer weapon he had at his disposal. Even people as powerful as the eight lords of the Sacred Cities would probably be heavily wounded if struck! After he acquired the Universe treasure in the Terror Starsea, the Universe treasure had guided him to another ancient battle-site of the Dawn War, where he had acquired two mighty relics. The ‘cycleseed dart’ was one of the two, and it was an extremely venomous and insidious treasure.

Daolord Feich hadn’t been strong enough, and so he had almost instantly died once hit.

“For the sake of the Voidsea Jadeseal, everything is worth it.” Winesage only felt a sense of jubilation. He had been alive for far too long, over a hundred thousand chaos cycles. He had braved many dangers over these years for the sake of his Daomerge! Now that the Voidsea Jadeseals had appeared, he would be willing to pay any price to acquire them.

“With the help of two Voidsea Jadeseals, my chances at succeeding with the Daomerge shall be greatly improved.” Winesage turned to sweep his gaze across the many Daolords. All of them, including Dawnstar, the Radiant King, Dreamlore, and Paleos were all staring at him nervously.

That treasure he had displayed was far too terrifying! Although Daolord Feich only had an imperfect ‘invulnerable form’ which had merely been on par with that of Timedream, one must remember that Ning had spent an inordinate amount of time before he had killed Timedream! Just now, however, Daolord Feich had been slain in an instant. How could everyone not feel stunned?

“It’s impressive that he had even a single treasure like that. I refuse to believe Winesage has another one,” the Radiant King sent mentally.

“Right.”

“And we’re much stronger than Feich.” Daolord Owlblack’s eyes glowed with savage light.

“I would’ve knocked that streak of light aside with just a single strike.”

Daolord Dreamlore's eyes gleamed with madness as well. "Winesage has TWO of the Voidsea Jadeseals, and he hasn't had the chance to use any of them. Both of them are still on him. Attack!"

"Attack!"

"Kill him."

All the Daolords moved at the same time. They didn't care about Ji Ning at all right now. Six command talismans? Even if Ning had all nine, they would still view a single Voidsea Jadeseal as being far more valuable... and Winesage had two of them!

"They actually are attacking?" As soon as the Daolords began to attack, Winesage gritted his teeth and began to flee.

.....

A black earth golem was chatting with Ning and Ninedust.

"Senior, here is the ninth command talisman." Ning produced the relevant talisman.

"Yes." The Grovekeeper lowered his head to look at it, then reached out to accept it. Instantly, one arm after another began to emerge from the vast black earth back in the first world and started to harvest the fruits from the many large, semi-translucent trees nearby. The black arms pulled the fruit into the earth, then caused them to reappear next to the Grovekeeper. Every single tree only had a single fruit. The fruit was semi-translucent as well, with a faint reddish tinge to them. When Ning and Ninedust looked at the red glow, they felt their hearts grow peaceful.

"A total of three hundred fruits." The Grovekeeper looked at Ning. "These are known as the coldflame cauldron fruits, and they are priceless beyond compare. Even in unique places like Crimsonwave Palace, they take 100,000 chaos cycles to ripen."

"Understood." Ning stared at the three hundred fruits flying towards him, then waved his hand and collected all of them.

"Come, let's go over there." Ning led Ninedust towards yet another one

of the Grovekeepers who had appeared in the third world.

“Darknorth, look over there!” Ninedust hurriedly pointed off into the distance.

“Wow.” Ning was surprised. “What’s going on with Winesage? How’d he piss off all the Daolords and get them to attack him?”

Every single Daolord was pursuing and attacking Winesage! This was primarily because Winesage had never chosen to ally with any of the other Daolords. Ning had once invited Winesage to join forces with him, but Winesage had been too proud to do so.

Poor Winesage.

“Forget him. Let’s go harvest that fruit,” Ning said. As he spoke, he and Ninedust flew towards the seventh Grovekeeper and asked him to harvest the fruit from the seventh command talisman.

Boom! Winesage was incredibly strong, and his Universe treasure gave him the strength he needed to endure. With each clash, four or five supreme Daolords were sent flying. However, the other supreme Daolords continued their pursuit, even tossing out Dao-seals and other treasures.

“I have to stand within this diagram for ten seconds before I’ll be sent back to the second world?” Winesage ground his teeth. “Why do I have to wait this long?”

“Winesage, there’s no chance you’ll be able to stand there for ten seconds.”

“You won’t be able to escape.”

The many supreme Daolords were all working together to assault Winesage, giving him no chance to defeat them individually at all. Given how many people were assaulting him, it was simply impossible for Winesage to stand there without moving for ten seconds. How was he supposed to escape? If this continued, he’d eventually be defeated. But was he supposed to actually hand over the Voidsea Jadeseal? He wasn’t willing to!

Winesage suddenly saw two figures off in the distance who were chatting with the Grovekeeper in a leisurely fashion. It was Ning and Ninedust.

“Darknorth, give me a hand!” Winesage sent frantically.

Chapter 22: Ji Ning's Request

"Here are five hundred and sixty of the golden sandsifter fruit." The Grovekeeper delivered one gleaming golden fruit after another to Ji Ning, who waved his hand and accepted them.

"Darknorth, give me a hand!" Winesage's voice rang out within Ning's mind.

"Eh?" Ning frowned as he turned to look at the furious battle raging off in the distance. There were more than twenty Daolords encircling and attacking Winesage, but Winesage was so incredibly strong that he was able to ensure his enemies weren't able truly work together flawlessly. Each time, Winesage 'only' had to deal with ten of them at most.

"What's wrong, Darknorth?" Ninedust asked.

"It's Winesage. He asked me for assistance." Ning smiled. "He's just barely hanging on right now, but with so many Daolords attacking him he's unable to remain within the teleportation diagram for ten seconds. There's no way for him to leave the third world, much less Crimsonwave Temple."

Ninedust laughed. "It's his own fault for hogging two of the Voidsea Jade seals, and not even rushing off to use them! He was too self-confident."

"Agreed." Ning nodded. In truth, using the seals in the Waveshift Realm was indeed a bit wasteful. Daolords would generally make plentiful preparations before using up the Voidsea Jade seal, but for safety's sake Ninedust had used his up long ago. That way, he could ensure that he wouldn't be attacked by everyone else.

"Darknorth, give me a hand! Just tell me what you want!" Winesage sent frantically.

"Why should I help you?" Ning and Ninedust stood off in the distance, watching relaxedly from afar. Ning sent back placidly, "You are being assaulted by numerous Daolords, and you aren't able to escape them. You

are locked into combat. Before you die, you'll probably be able to kill a few of them. I could simply go in then and mop up the rest."

"Before I die? I'm not going to commit suicide for the sake of these seals," Winesage sent back. "If the situation truly turns dire, I'd rather offer one of them up and ensure that I stay safe."

"Then go ahead and hand me one of the Voidsea Jadeseals, both of your command talismans, and some of your other treasures. If you do, I'll help out," Ning sent mentally.

"That's a bit much, isn't it?" Winesage replied mentally, "All I need to do is hand a Voidsea Jadeseal over to King Paleos! If I do that, King Paleos and his group of eight Daolords will be willing to swear lifeblood oaths not to attack me and even help me out! With the eight of them helping me instead of attacking me, I'll be able to escape with ease."

Ning couldn't help but nod when he heard this. Right. The attacking Daolords weren't all on the same page either; they were divided up into multiple 'factions'. The Daolords under King Paleos constituted one faction, the Radiant King led a second faction, Daolord Dreamlore's four-man team made up a third faction, while Palace Lord Dawnstar's five-man squad made up a fourth faction.

Any of the four factions could be bribed using a Voidsea Jadeseal! So long as one of the four joined Winesage, Winesage would be able to break this stalemate.

"It seems I won't have a shot at winning the Voidsea Jadeseal," Ning mused to himself. In truth, he didn't even really want it that much; he had intentionally started off with a very high ask. "Well, give me all the treasures you own, aside from the Voidsea Jadeseals and your weapons. Do that and I'll help you," Ning sent back.

"All my treasures? Those two talismans are enough!" Winesage was growing rather angry. "Darknorth, I've been alive for more than a hundred thousand chaos cycles and have experienced countless dangers. Am I supposed to just give you all of my treasures? Don't you feel that you are asking for a bit much?"

“Not at all. Compared to the Voidsea Jadeseals, those things are worthless.” Ning shook his head.

“Two command talismans. That’s it.” Winesage ground his teeth. “There’s no way I’ll give you anything else! I need to at least be able to keep myself safe. There’s no way I can just give you all of my treasures. Those treasures are enough for me to bribe a few of those Daolords into joining me.”

“Hmph.” A cold light flashed through Ning’s eyes. “True, you need to stay alive. Fine! I can agree to let you keep two life-preserving treasures. Aside from those two treasures, the Voidsea Jadeseals, and your weapons, everything else you own now belongs to me! If you agree, I’ll immediately come over and help out. If you refuse... then I’m going to join in and attack you as well!”

“You...!” Winesage’s face turned gray. Ning was going to attack as well? Ning was a tremendous threat to him. When Ning had defeated the black-armored general in the second world, Winesage had immediately understood that Ning had grown much more powerful and was now close to him in might! Once Ning intervened, the situation would immediately turn even grimmer.

“You can keep the Voidsea Jadeseals, your weapons, and two life-preserving treasures. I’ll wager that you only have a few valuable ones anyhow,” Ning sent back. “Letting you choose and keep two of them isn’t a bad offer.”

Winesage ground his teeth. What a nasty piece of work this Darknorth was, kicking him when he was down! However... Winesage belonged to the Dark Kingdom, while Darknorth belonged to the Dao Alliance and the Brightshore Kingdom. They belonged to enemy organizations to begin with, and Winesage had even attacked Ning previously! Everyone was doing this for the sake of the treasures they wanted. Personal feelings had nothing to do with it.

“Fine.” Winesage gritted his teeth and accepted Ning’s offer, but his heart was bleeding.

He was the number one Daolord of the Endless Territories and had braved many dangerous areas, earning even a Universe treasure for himself. He had naturally accumulated an enormous number of treasures! Now, he had to hand nearly ninety percent of them over to Ning... how could he NOT feel heartache at the prospect?

Still... his lifespan was coming to an end. The Daomerge was what truly mattered!

“Good.” Ning revealed a smile. “Shall we swear a lifeblood oath?”

“Of course we have to swear a lifeblood oath!” Winesage said frantically.

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Ning knew that acquiring a Voidsea Jadeseal was rather unlikely. In truth, he was different from the other Daolords; he never really wanted one of the seals that much to begin with. He was perfectly happy earning two of the command talismans. For him to earn the many other treasures which Winesage had accumulated over the years made him even happier.

“Ninedust, I just negotiated a little something with Winesage.” Ning quickly explained what had happened to Ninedust.

“Ah?!” Ninedust revealed a delighted look. “Hah! Savage! Too bad, though, that you weren’t able to get one of those Voidsea Jadeseals. Still, if he was willing to part with one of them he wouldn’t hand over all these other treasures.”

“The two of us will split those treasures once we get them,” Ning sent.

“Split them?” Ninedust was startled. “No way. No way! You go help him out. I won’t be of much use.”

“Both of the command talismans are mine, but we’ll split all the other treasures. I’ve already taken the lion’s share,” Ning said with a calm smile. Winesage certainly had many treasures, but all of them combined probably weren’t worth as much as the fruits! Even Hegemons and the Dao Alliance had gone crazy over those fruits! Winesage had ‘only’ been alive for a hundred thousand chaos cycles; compared to the mighty Hegemons, that was nothing. The Hegemons certainly had far more

treasures by far! Thus, his treasures were probably worth just a fraction of what the fruits were worth.

Ninedust had already given Ning three command talismans. How could Ning not give him some treasure in compensation?

In addition, it was likely that they would acquire a number of life-preserving treasures from Winesage. As good friends, splitting them was nothing. Even Sectlord Timedream had given quite a few treasures to the Kingfreak! In addition, at Ning's level these treasures were generally of very little use to him. What he needed was truly stunning treasures such as the Crimsonwave Temple fruits, treasures which would drive even Hegemons wild with lust.

"Let's go. Follow me." Ning transformed into a streak of light.

"Time to attack?" Ninedust immediately grew excited. Thanks to his invulnerable aquaform, he was even better at staying alive than Ning was. He naturally felt eager to take part in this fight!

"I don't think that'll even be necessary," Ning said.

Boom! Ning transformed into a streak of light that charged over from afar. His heartworld projection came crashing down, as did his nine novessence arts. Ning was like an enormous comet blazing through the skies towards the battlefield, while the Ninedust Sectlord roared with laughter by his side. "Daoloooooords! I'm coming for you all!" He transformed into a vast wave of water that swept through the world like a tidal wave towards the enemy Daolords.

"Is that Darknorth?"

"That's Daolord Darknorth!"

The faces of the many Daolords assaulting Winesage all tightened, with Dawnstar, Cloudwalker, and Ninestone in particular frowning unhappily. These three were of the Brightshore Kingdom and thus weren't worried about Ning attacking them, but they wouldn't be able to attack Ning either.

"Daolord Darknorth, we didn't go to cause you any trouble. Why are you

getting involved?!” King Paleos roared angrily.

“Darknorth, we don’t want your command talismans. Don’t interfere!” Daolord Dreamlore snapped.

All of them were furious. Darknorth had already acquired quite a few command talismans, attracting their envy. They all knew just how valuable those things were! However, for the sake of the Voidsea Jadeseal, they didn’t want to get into a lengthy altercation with him.

“So what if I DO interfere?” A thunderous voice rang out from the heavens as the vast comet of heartforce and energy came crashing down into the battlefield. The Yin-Yang Chaos Domain began to merge together with Winesage’s secret arts as the two joined forces, striking out at their foes.

Swish! Ning disappeared into thin air. He had just used his Shadowless evasion art to move within range of Winesage’s secret arts! Winesage and him were in the same region now. Although Winesage knew that Ning had entered that region, he didn’t force Ning to reveal himself; instead, he aided Ning as best he could.

“He vanished.”

“Darknorth just vanished. Be careful!”

The other Daolords all had ugly looks on their faces.

Chapter 23: Adventure's End

They would rather surround and attack Winesage than have to deal with Darknorth. Although Winesage was slightly stronger than Darknorth, he fought in a direct and aboveboard manner. The Daolords all knew where he was, at least! This made surrounding him and attacking him much easier. If Winesage wanted to attack one of them, the others would see it coming and be able to prepare for him accordingly. Daolord Darknorth, however, was another story.

He had assassination arts that allowed him to vanish without a trace, keeping all of the Daolords on their toes. This sort of feeling was quite uncomfortable!

Whoosh. Ning appeared out of nowhere close to two of the Daolords.

“He’s over there!”

“Retreat, quick!”

“Don’t take him head-on!”

The two Daolords were so terrified that they turned pale. By now, everyone knew that Winesage and Darknorth stood at the very apex of power amongst the supreme Daolords. Even the third-ranked Daolord Dreamlore had been blasted back by a single strike from Darknorth! The difference in power was quite apparent.

Swoosh. Ning charged straight forwards, easily deflecting the secret arts and treasures that were assaulting him.

Swish! Swish! Two streaks of mist-formed sword energy tore through the air. Although those two supreme Daolords strove to defend, they were still both knocked flying back from this single clash. One had been struck on the body while the other had been able to block with a shield-type treasure, but even then he was sent flying from the tremendous power of Ning’s sword.

“Everyone, let’s pause for a moment.” Ning’s voice rang out.

The twenty-plus attacking Daolords all had ugly looks on their faces, but

they did indeed pause as they all stared at Ning.

Whoosh. Only now did the vast waveformed Ninedust reach Ning's side, where he quickly returned to his human shape once more.

Winesage, Ning, and Ninedust stood shoulder-to-shoulder.

Ning smiled as he looked at the Daolords before him. "Daolords, you should know quite well that with Winesage, myself, and Ninedust working together, we would be able to defeat even ten supreme Daolords... and given my assassination arts, I imagine that it wouldn't be too hard to actually kill a few of you."

"Hmph." These supreme Daolords were extremely unhappy to hear this, but they all knew that Ning was telling the truth. Just now, he had merely struck out with two swords against those two supreme Daolords. If he had focused all six swords on one of them, he probably would've been able to smash that supreme Daolord to death! By himself, he might not be that grave of a danger, but with Winesage and Ninedust assisting him, Ning would be an utter terror to deal with. This was only worsened by the fact that Dawnstar, Ninestone, and Cloudwalker couldn't even attack Ning.

"Darknorth," Palace Lord Dawnstar called out.

"Brother Dawnstar, treasures go to the strong and the deserving," Ning said. "All of us have come here to compete over the treasures, and we do that based on how strong we are as well as how lucky we are. Winesage has promised me enough treasures to agree to help him out. If this battle continues... you won't be able to harm us, but some of you will probably die."

"Hmph." Daolord Dreamlore and the others all had ugly looks on their faces.

"Darknorth ended up taking advantage of the situation."

"Winesage won two of the Voidsea Jadeseals, while Darknorth acquired almost all of the command talismans. These two bastards." The supreme Daolords felt rather resentful at this outcome.

"What, do you really want to keep fighting instead of bringing this to a

close?” Ning said calmly, “I really don’t care one way or the other.”

“Gentlemen, shall we keep fighting?” Winesage said coldly

All of the Daolords were prepared to act without remorse for the sake of these treasures... but alas, they had encountered the even more remorseless Ji Ning and Winesage.

The supreme Daolords exchanged glances. Although they didn’t want to accept this, they could read the writing on the wall. Winesage himself was far stronger than all other Daolords. As for Darknorth, he had already been strong prior to entering Crimsonwave Temple, and he had now grown to become even more terrifying. Once these two terrifying Daolords joined together, they truly would be a deadly force to reckon with.

“You two really are nasty pieces of work.” Daolord Dreamlore turned and started to walk away. “Let’s go.”

“Let’s go.”

“Let’s leave.” One supreme Daolord after another began to step into the teleportation diagram.

Ninestone looked at Ning. “Darknorth, I imagine you ended up making a killing off of Winesage. Impressive.”

“King Nine.” Ning nodded. “It was all luck.”

“I want to have your luck,” Palace Lord Dawnstar muttered.

“Let’s go. We have some fruit to harvest as well,” Palace Lord Cloudwalker said.

There were a total of nine command talismans. Ning’s group had eight of them, while Dawnstar’s group had acquired one as well... the eighth command talisman!

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The Daolords were all quite intelligent. They’d only fight if they felt that they had a chance at victory. If their chances were nil, who would be so foolish as to get into a fight and possibly die? Thus, once Ning and Ninedust showed themselves, Ning only had to display a bit of his power

in order to let them know that it was time to leave.

“You utter savage.” Winesage turned to look at Ning, a mixed look on his face. “You didn’t have to do a damn thing, but now I have to give you all my treasures.”

“Cut the crap. Hurry up and hand’m over,” Ning said with a grin on his face.

There was nothing Winesage could do. Still, although he looked quite helpless and unhappy, he was actually in an excellent mood. His lifespan was coming to its end, after all! If he failed his Daomerge, what would be the point of keeping all those treasures? If he succeeded, he would become a Hegemon, making the treasures of even less use to him! This was why the Voidsea Jadesoul and the Universe weapon truly were the only things that really mattered to him right now.

“Take it. I’ve killed quite a few supreme Daolords and collected all of their treasures. Now, all of it will belong to you.” Winesage handed over a round disc.

Ning accepted the disc. Once he scanned it, he immediately revealed a look of delight. Due to the lifeblood oath binding them, Ning didn’t worry about Winesage holding anything back at all; if Winesage had, he would’ve already seen his truesoul shattered by the lifeblood oath.

“Come, come, come! Ninedust, this portion is yours.” Ning swept through the disc with his godsense, then quickly split the treasure up into two portions. One portion, Ning put into a storage gourd which he then handed to Ninedust.

“Fine.” Ninedust didn’t decline, electing to accept the gourd. Once he scanned it: “My goodness, that’s a lot of treasure! That’s far more than I had originally.” Ninedust was delighted.

“This is Winesage we’re talking about! How could you and I compare to him when it comes to wealth?” Ning smirked.

The nearby Winesage couldn’t help but let out a cold snort when he heard this. Still, he chose to stay next to Ning and Ninedust. Only by

travelling alongside them would his safety be guaranteed.

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Ning, Ninedust, and Winesage travelled together to each of the Grovekeepers, using up the various command talismans to acquire the fruit they needed. Crimsonwave Temple had a total of nine types of fruit, and Ning managed to acquire eight of them.

In truth, this was primarily because he had chosen from the beginning to give up on the Voidsea Jadeseals and instead focus his time and attention on the third world. That was why he had acquired so many command talismans... especially seeing as how it was his decision to let Ninedust take a jade seal that resulted in Ninedust giving him all three command talismans! But of course, the other reason was that Ning was indeed strong enough. He and Winesage completely eclipsed all other Daolords in power.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Three streaks of light flew out of Crimsonwave Temple. They included a white-robed youth with a golden scabbard on his back, a black-robed man, and a silver-robed man bearing a staff.

“We finally made it out.” Winesage smiled.

“Let’s go. Let’s leave this place.” Ning stared forwards towards the giant spatial tunnel in front of them that traversed the skies. Clearly, the realmsoul had established this tunnel as a way out of the Waveshift Realm.

“Time to leave.” Ninedust revealed a delighted look as well.

All three of them had won many things here.

Winesage had acquired two of the Voidsea Jadeseals.

Ninedust had won a Voidsea Jadeseal and had also acquired many treasures.

Ji Ning hadn’t acquired any of the seals, but he had harvested the priceless fruits of eight command talismans.

“Time to go.” The three transformed into streaks of light that soared into the skies, quickly departing from the Waveshift Realm.

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A large host of figures were waiting outside the spatial tunnel that exited the Waveshift Realm. These were all ancient Eternal Emperors. They normally were secluded in different parts of the Endless Territories, but they had all gathered here today.

At the very front of the vast host, there were six groups of tremendous power. These were the leaders of the Dao Alliance, the Brightshore Kingdom, the Aeonians, the Aberrant special lifeforms, and the Ancient cultivators. All of them stared towards the tunnel with anticipation.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. One Daolord after another flew out.

“They’re coming out.”

“Here they come.” Quite a few of the ancient Emperors had been waiting anxiously.

“Owlblack,” a white-haired elder called out.

“Ah? Patriarch!” Daolord Owlblack immediately called out respectfully upon seeing this man.

“Do you know who ended up with the coldflame cauldron fruits?” the white-haired elder immediately asked.

“The coldflame cauldron fruits. Who took them?”

“Where are they?”

“Who acquired the coldflame cauldron fruits?”

Quite a few ancient Eternal Emperors echoed this question. However, the truly high-status figures like the Hegemons were quite calm, because they had received word long ago that Ning was the one to acquire the ninth command talisman.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. More Daolords continued to arrive. Finally, three more streaks of light flew out. They were Winesage, Ninedust, and Ji

Ning.

This entire time, the three awesome Hegemons known as Netherlily, Windrain, and Brightshore had been quite calm and quiet, as had the leaders of the other three major powers. Upon seeing the white-robed youth who had a golden scabbard on his back appear, they immediately flew in unison towards him.

“Darknorth.”

“Daolord Darknorth.”

“Darknorth, my young friend.” One call after another rang out. The most supreme Emperors of the Endless Territories were all staring at Ning, smiles on their faces and looks of incomparable friendliness in their eyes. Even the leaders of the Dark Kingdom and the Aeonians were beaming towards him.

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